Commentary

Volume Fifty-three, Number Two, February 1972

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Harold Kaplan on B.F. Skinner
Irving Howe on George Steiner
Dorothy Rabinowitz on Eleanor Roosevelt
Edward Grossman on Jean-François Revel
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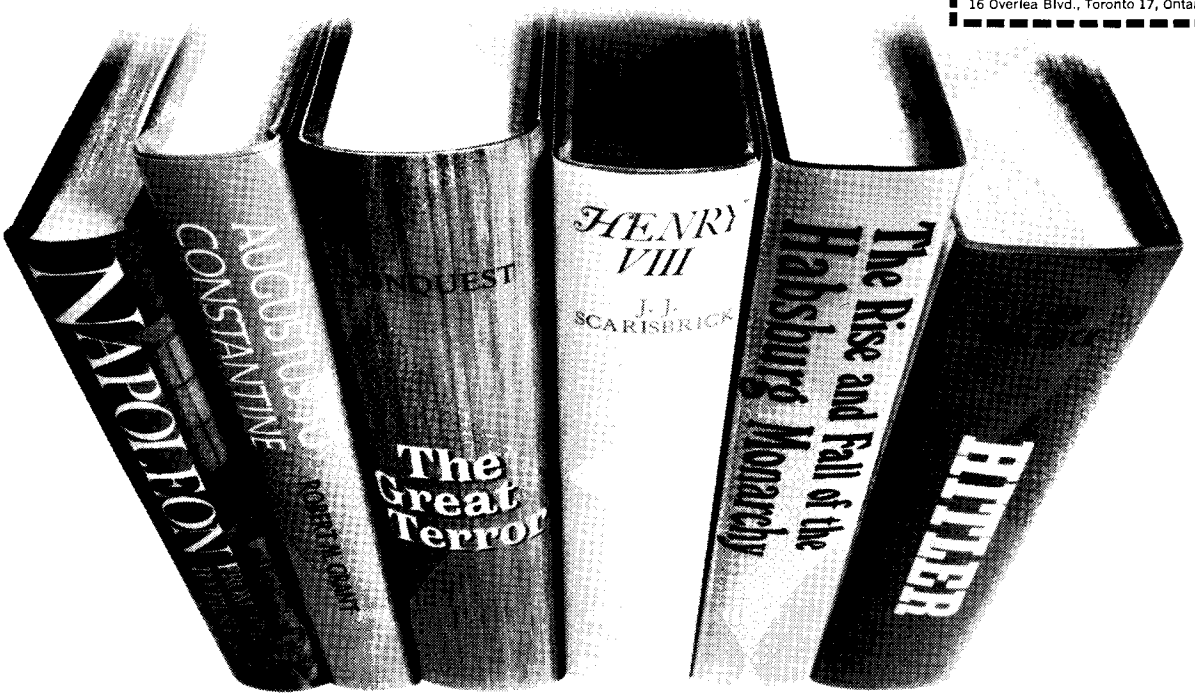

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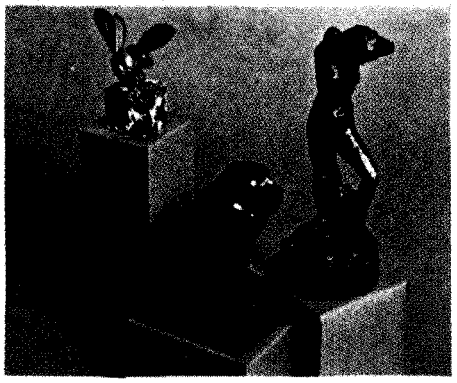

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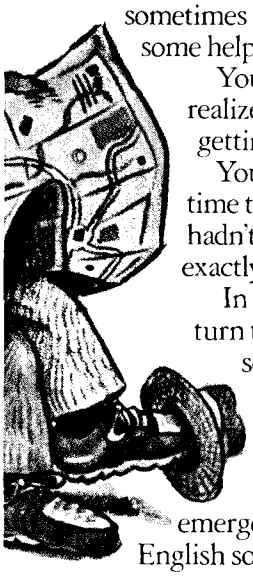

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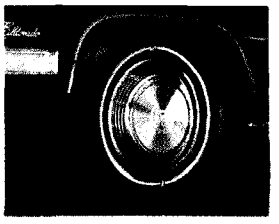

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"Is It Good for the Jews?"

Norman Podhoretz

ALTHOUGH he scarcely touches on the implications of "affirmative action" for Jews, Paul Seabury's article (p. 38), especially taken in conjunction with Earl Raab's "Quotas by Any Other Name" in the January COMMENTARY, has persuaded me that the question, *Is it good for the Jews?*—a question as old, in all probability, as the Jewish Diaspora itself—has not quite reached the end of its ancient career as a useful guide to thought. Yet there was a time in America, not so long ago, when to many of us, perhaps to most American Jews, the question no longer ever occurred: far from being the first, it was more likely to be the last, consideration that sprang to our minds in relation to any event. And if it were ever asked in our presence, or in anything we happened to read, our response was likely to be one of embarrassment or of anger or of contempt—unless of course we were being exquisite, in which case we might be charmed. *Is it good for the Jews?* The question bespoke a mentality no broader than the horizons of the tribe, and it carried an odor of alien worlds—of the empire of the Hapsburgs and the Russia of the Czars—which had long since crumbled to dust. To the world of the American Jew, to the situation in which he found himself, to the conditions under which he lived, this ridiculously parochial question, redeemed, if it was redeemed, only by its antiquarian appeal, could, we used to think, have no connection at all.

We had cause to feel this way. During the period running from the end of the Second World War to the middle or late 60's, Jews had no need to ask whether anything was good for the Jews, for the simple and sufficient reason that in America at least almost everything was good for the Jews. Anti-Semitism still existed, mainly on the political Right, but so discredited had it become through its association with the name of Hitler that no one who aspired to respectable status in American public life dared voice anti-Semitic sentiments openly or dared make any use of anti-Semitism in appealing for the support of others. For the penalty was instant banishment from the world of acceptable opinion. Thus, for example, Joe McCarthy, sensitive to the vulnerability of any right-wing movement to accusations of anti-Semitism and fully aware of the damage such accusations could do, went out of his way to appoint two Jews with markedly Jewish names as his chief assistants, while even the more extreme John Birch Society declared that anti-Semites were unwelcome to its ranks and even went so far as to expel members of the Society who were unable to restrain their frisky anti-Semitic passions when writing or speaking in public. Whether or not, then, the actual level of anti-Semitic feeling declined in America, the sheer number of anti-Semitic statements, or indeed of statements hostile to Jews in any way or to any degree, most certainly did decline in the public prints, on the airways, in political speeches, and probably even in private conversation.

Along with this decline in the open expression of anti-Semitic sentiments and ideas went a precipitous decline in discriminatory practices against Jews. Pockets of discrimination continued, of course, to exist. There were areas in which Jews were prevented from buying homes; there were cooperative apartment buildings—even in New York!—from which Jews were more or less openly barred. There were resorts and private social clubs to which Jews were not admitted. There were business enterprises which kept Jews out of the executive suite. But between 1945 and 1965 most of these practices became illegal, and if this did not cause them to disappear entirely, it certainly made them harder to follow and easier to fight where the will to fight was aroused.

It was this same period that saw the apparent end of quotas restricting the number of Jews who could be admitted into the elite colleges and the better professional schools. Such quotas, often operating under cover of the search for geographical and social balance, had been in existence since the early 1920's,* and in an informal way they had also governed the hiring of faculty. By 1960 they seemed to have become almost entirely a thing of the past.

But to say merely that open anti-Semitism virtually disappeared and that discrimination against Jews declined would be to put the case too negatively. The truth is that the American climate of the first two postwar decades was not only less hostile to Jews than it had formerly been; it was also more congenial. Not only were obstacles removed, but invitations were issued. Not only were Jews less and less excluded from more and more places; they were also made to feel more and more welcome, more and more at home. Having, for example, always considered itself—without thinking about the matter very much—a Christian country, the United States suddenly began extending recognition to Judaism as one of the major American religions. The rabbi became an obligatory part-

* See "How Jewish Quotas Began," by Stephen Steinberg, in the September 1971 COMMENTARY.

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ner of the minister and the priest on every ceremonial occasion, and though this development was not without its comic side, the fact remained that Jews as Jews were being invited in, no longer alienated to that most literal extent.

Another and perhaps more telling example of how positively congenial the American climate became to the Jew in the period under consideration was the interest which developed in Jewish writers and artists and intellectuals, and the sympathy which began to be shown for their work. Having formerly played only a minor role in American letters, Jews all at once began finding an audience for the things they had to say, and the more Jewish in character they were—the more they wrote about Jewish life in particular and the more they wrote in a style which betrayed its connections with Yiddish and with the contours of immigrant life—the bigger and more appreciative, it remarkably seemed, the audience would turn out to be.

And of course the literary world was not the only world in which Jews were able to benefit from and take advantage of a newly benign environment. Everywhere they seemed to be prospering. Jews without money there continued to be, especially in the bigger cities, but the Jews who lived in poverty were in some ways even more invisible than Michael Harrington said their non-white counterparts had become, if only because the Jewish community as a whole was in so vivid a state of economic bounteousness, with only the Episcopalians—the most aristocratic of the Protestant groups—to rival them in this respect. In business and in all the liberal professions, including of course the profession of teaching, the Jews were doing well, and so were most of their children, so many of whom were going to college that the exceptions came to be looked on as strange, almost, even, as a species of social deviant.

UNDER such circumstances of security and prosperity, why would anyone ask whether anything was good for the Jews? Surely *everything* was good for the Jews. But is everything good for the Jews today? There are those who say yes and they can argue with great plausibility that the situation as I have just described it remains in all essential respects the same and in some important respects has even, from the Jewish point of view, improved. A dramatic area of improvement, for example, is political life. As Milton Ellerin of the American Jewish Committee has reminded us, more Jews than ever are running for elective office, including such high offices as Governor and United States Senator, and more of them are getting elected than ever before. Despite the greater visibility of Jews on the political scene, moreover, the taboo on the use of anti-Semitism in electoral campaigns continues to be rigidly observed.

All this is true and it is reassuring and it must be kept in mind. But other things are true as well which are not so reassuring and which must also be kept in mind. If the taboo on the use of anti-Semitism in electoral campaigns continues to be rigidly enforced, it has ceased being rigidly enforced in other areas of American life; and if the anti-Semitism of the Right continues to live underground, the anti-Semitism of the Left has moved in recent years out of the foul-smelling catacombs of the radical tradition and into the common light of day. On the radical Left—despite the fact but also of course because of the fact that so many of its members are Jews—the hostility to Israel often spills over into a hostility to Jews, just as the hatred of middle-class values often spills over into the hatred of Jews. Among blacks, and especially at the extreme edges of the movement for community control where the likes of LeRoi Jones hold sway, there is overt anti-Semitism of the crassest and crudest kind, and white liberal supporters of this movement—again including a number of Jews—have been extraordinarily reticent in their response to it and even more extraordinarily reluctant to penalize black anti-Semites with the loss of sympathy and support.

And finally there is the literary

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world. For some time now the sound of grumbling has been heard in the English Departments of the land over the prominent position of Jews in the world of American letters, and to those with ears to hear it is a sound with ominous echoes of Berlin and Vienna in the 20's. To make the echo even more ominous, the Jewish prominence in cultural life is often attributed today, just as it was in the past, neither to accident nor to merit, but rather to a Jewish conspiracy. Thus Truman Capote exposes the existence of a phenomenon he calls "the Jewish Mafia in American letters." This is, Capote asserts, "a clique of New York-oriented writers and critics who control much of the literary scene through the influence of the quarterlies and intellectual magazines. All these publications are Jewish-dominated and this particular coterie employs them to make or break writers by advancing or withholding attention." And Capote goes on: "Bernard Malamud and Saul Bellow and Philip Roth and Isaac Bashevis Singer and Norman Mailer are all fine writers but they're not the *only* writers in the country as the Jewish Mafia would have us believe. I could give you a list of excellent writers . . . ; the odds are you haven't heard of most of them for the simple reason that the Jewish Mafia has systematically frozen them out of the literary scene." Now Truman Capote is certainly not an anti-Semite. Nevertheless this statement, with its mixture of half-truths and outright falsifications, with its paranoid view of Jewish power, with its dementedly exaggerated notion of Jewish solidarity, and with its self-pitying and self-exculpating *ressentiment*, might almost have sprung full-blown from a classical anti-Semitic tract. Is this kind of thinking confined to Capote alone? Not according to him. The sinister workings of the Jewish Mafia are known, he says, to "everyone in the literary world."

In short, after a period during which the volume of openly expressed hostility to Jews declined to a level so low as to be scarcely perceptible at all, we seem to have entered a period in which the taboo is being weakened and the same restraints no longer obtain. If one made a simple numerical tally of references unfriendly to Jews in the public prints since, say, 1967—the date of the Six-Day War when so many intellectuals of radical stripe or sympathy responded to the victory of Israel with an "anti-Zionism" which was not always easy to distinguish from the anti-Semitism of old, and the date as well which marked the beginning of the terrible struggle over the New York schools, a struggle in the course of which black anti-Semitism, however much or little of it there may be within the black community as a whole, erupted for the first time into widespread public view, and just by diabolical coincidence as the backlash against the Jewish position in the cultural life of the country was gathering enough force to make itself heard with the kind of brazen directness we get in the statement by Truman Capote I quoted above—if one made such a tally, one would certainly find a spectacular increase in the volume of anti-Jewish utterance as compared with any period of similar length in the 50's or early 60's.

BUT what about discrimination against Jews? In the days when anti-Semitic sentiments and ideas were banished from the spectrum of respectable opinion in America, discriminatory practices against Jews also showed a corresponding decline. Of course, it was not in every case for the sake of the Jews alone, or even primarily for the sake of the Jews at all, that such practices were made illegal or voluntarily suspended. The measures which outlawed discrimination in employment and housing—which established that an applicant must be judged as an individual without reference (in a phrase which is itself coming to have an antiquarian charm) to "race, creed, or color"—were instituted with the Negro more directly in mind than the Jew, although the Jew benefited too. When a system based, in principle and also very largely in practice, on merit as measured by anonymous examination results

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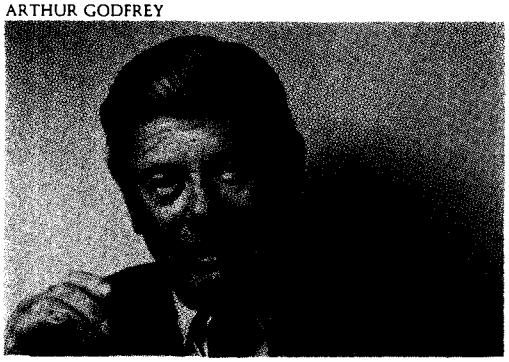
ARTHUR GODFREY



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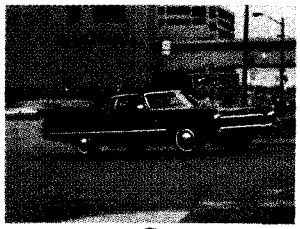

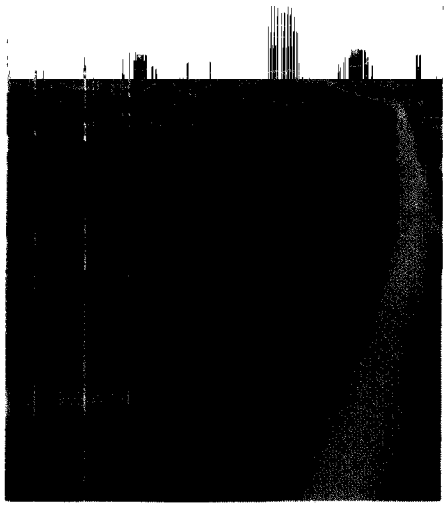

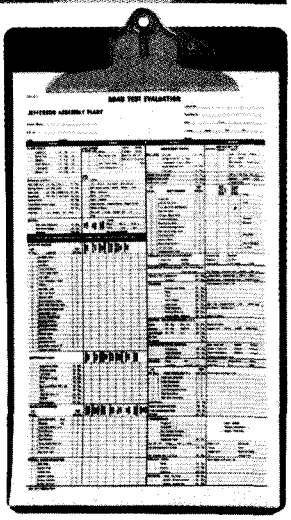

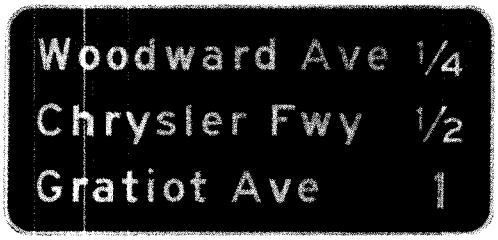

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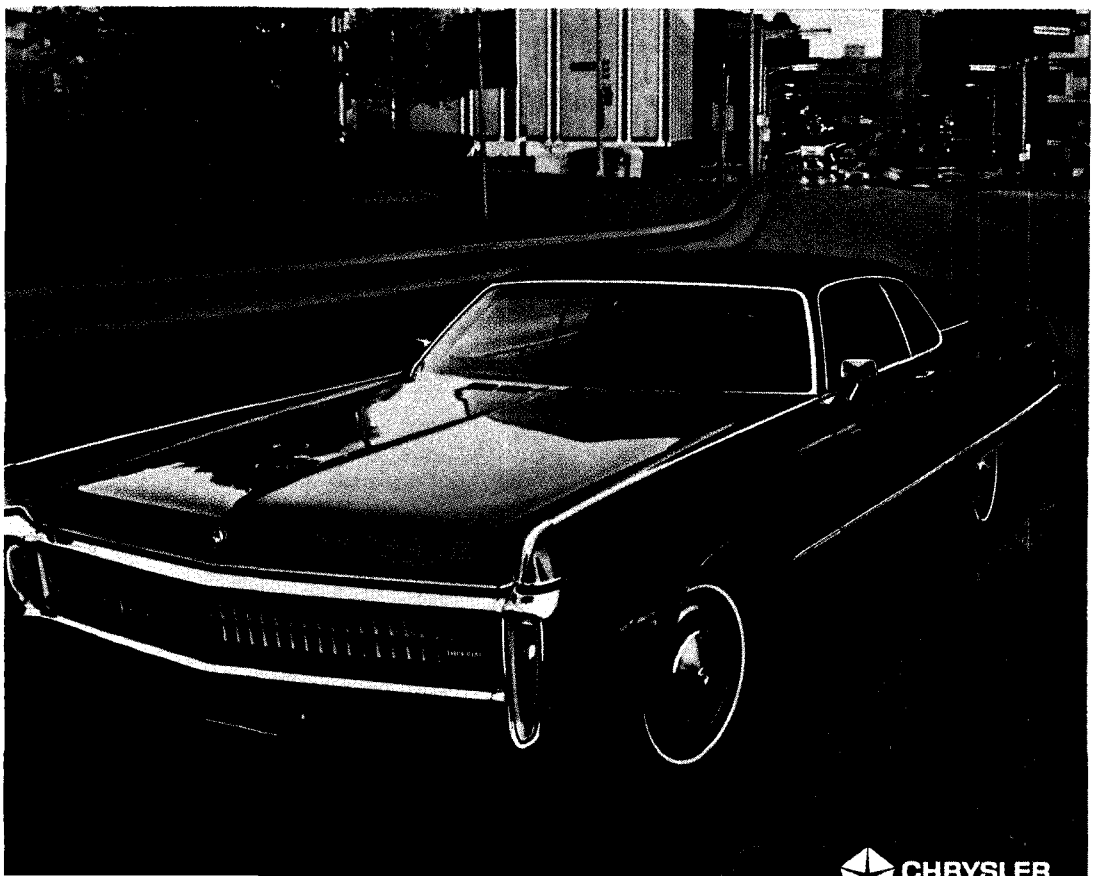

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was put into operation in the field of government service, the purpose was not to help Jews become schoolteachers or principals or social workers or hospital administrators, although this was certainly a result; the purpose was to do away as far as possible with the spoils system, with nepotism and politically-controlled appointments. When, as recently as 1957—only, as historical time is measured, a little minute ago—the quota system was dropped by many American colleges and replaced by an admissions policy almost exclusively geared to college-board scores, the intention was not to rectify the injustice which had been done to qualified Jewish applicants who, simply because they were Jewish, had once been passed over in favor of less qualified applicants; the intention was to upgrade the academic and intellectual standards of higher education in America lest the Russians outstrip us in technological advance, as their launching of Sputnik at a time when we were still unable to do the same, seemed to suggest they might. Still, whatever the purpose of these measures was, they did benefit the Jews and the fact that they did could only have been considered in a climate as friendly to Jews as the climate was then, a climate which was thoroughly anti-anti-Semitic, so to speak, an additional and most welcome bonus.

And today? Do we see an increase in discriminatory practices against Jews today? I am very much afraid that we do. The two principal areas are civil-service employment and university admissions and hiring practices, in both of which the idea of judging an individual without reference to "race, creed, or color" has lost considerable ground in favor of the idea of proportional representation according to race and, increasingly, according to sex, and very lately according also to ethnic group. But the same idea also seems to be gaining ground in areas besides the public sector and the universities. One example which comes to mind is the so-called Minority Advancement Plan, put forward in an article in the New York *Times Sunday Magazine* (August 22, 1971) by John Kenneth Galbraith, Edwin Kuh, and Lester C. Thurow. By the terms of this plan all firms of a certain size would be required by law to put a stated percentage of people drawn from "minority groups" into jobs paying $15,000 per year or more. Jews, although some might consider them a minority group, since they after all add up to a mere 3 per cent of the population, are not defined as such in the Galbraith Plan; nor are Italians or Poles or any other of the predominantly Catholic ethnic groups: only non-whites and women are minorities in this quaint and original conception. For Jews, like the other white ethnic groups, are, as Galbraith and his colleagues put it, already in the club, which is to say that they already have more than their fair share of the better-paying jobs. Now there are substantial reasons for disagreeing with this complacent view of the economic situation of the major ethnic groups. But let us acknowledge that Jews are more than proportionately represented among those in this country who earn $15,000 or more. Are they then to be fired under the Galbraith Plan? Or will they simply be phased out gradually by the adoption of an anti-Jewish quota in hiring and promotion? Galbraith and his colleagues do not say. Perhaps their idea is to replace the Jews in question with their wives, thereby killing at least two birds with one stone, and maybe even one or two more.

The extent to which this new idea of proportional representation is already being put into practice can be gauged from the cases described by Earl Raab in last month's COMMENTARY and by Paul Seabury in the current issue. Clearly it is not the primary purpose of those who support this tendency to discriminate against Jews—though it may be that in a climate in which Jews are commonly said to be *over*represented almost everywhere they are represented at all, the idea of putting the Jews in their place is considered by some a welcome bonus—just as, conversely, the opposite development was considered a welcome bonus in the more benevolent climate of the past. Putting such considerations aside, however, what is at stake here is a certain conception of social justice and a certain conception of prudence both of which in my opinion are seriously and even fatally flawed by errors of thought, of judgment, and of moral understanding. And whatever the motivations involved, the move toward proportional representation, even if it is not fanatically pursued to its logical conclusion of apportioning everything in the world only by group and in strict accordance with the size of the group, can no more avoid hurting the Jews than the abolition of the quota system—whatever the political considerations which may have led to its abolition—could in the past have avoided helping the Jews. For constituting only 3 per cent of the population, the Jews must inevitably be harmed by any move in the direction of a system of proportional representation according to group—and by a vigorous move in that direction, very seriously damaged.

DISCUSSING some of these tendencies on another occasion, I said that they warranted neither panic nor hysteria but "a certain anxiety."* Indeed I think they do. But I also think they warrant something else by way of a healthy Jewish response. I think they warrant a revival among Jews of that ancient and prematurely laughed-off question, *Is it good for the Jews?* That is to say, I think that Jews must once again begin to look at proposals and policies from the point of view of the Jewish interest, and must once again begin to ask what the consequences, if any, of any proposal or policy are likely to be so far as the Jewish position is concerned.

I realize, of course, that Jews will find this a very difficult thing to do. As Nathan Glazer has pointed out,† everyone nowadays is uncomfortable with the idea of

* COMMENTARY, August 1971.

† "Jewish Interests and the New Left," *Midstream*, January 1971.

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self-interest and Jews are perhaps, in the usual fashion of Jews, even more uncomfortable than everyone else. Nevertheless we have to face the fact that no one is likely so much as to recognize the presence of a Jewish interest in a particular issue, let alone concern himself with or speak for it, if the Jews do not do so themselves. And if the Jews fail to speak for the Jewish interest, we can be sure that measures will be taken without regard for whatever evil consequences they might inexorably, even if inadvertently, carry for the Jews. But the Jews can only speak effectively for their own interest if they accept the fact that they *have* an interest which may differ or conflict with the interests of others. More than that, they must also accept the fact that they have what I do not hesitate to call an inalienable human right—a right which is acknowledged and indeed honored as such by the most fundamental traditions of the American Republic—to pursue and defend that interest as energetically as they can within the limits of prudence and the restraints of the positive law.

There will, of course, be differences as to what precisely the Jewish interest is and where precisely it lies and how precisely it can best be defended or pursued. Some will wish to define it so narrowly as to include nothing beyond the immediate preoccupations of a xenophobic fringe. Some will see a Jewish interest wherever they turn their eyes; others will see one only where it most blatantly asserts itself. Some will wish to pursue the Jewish interest as they see it with singleminded zeal; others will wish to balance and weigh and navigate in circuitous lanes and paths. I do not say these differences will be easy to settle, but I do say they can be resolved in individual cases and in terms of concrete instances, so long as they are honestly discussed with a view toward answering the question, *Is it good for the Jews?* And so long as the aim is honestly to protect and defend the Jewish interest within the limits of prudence and the restraints of law, intelligent bargains can be struck, tactics can be developed, strategy can be designed.*

I am not, then, counseling the Jews to withdraw into a self-regarding parochialism. Nothing I say here is intended to imply that Jews have or should have no interests other than the strictly Jewish interest. I do not say that Jews should begin *and* end with the Jewish interest; I only say that they should begin with it, that it should be the first rather than the last consideration that enters their minds, and that they should bethink themselves long and hard before agreeing to see it compromised or altogether bargained away—though, of course, even if they do not agree, they may for lack of power be forced to see it compromised.

If a concern with the Jewish interest need not entail a sacrifice of concern with issues in which Jews have an interest along with other Americans and along with other members of the human race, neither need it entail the transformation of the American-Jewish community into a merely selfish and self-seeking group. For as it happens the Jews are at this moment in an extremely good position to serve the best interests of the country as a whole by attempting to serve their own. I believe that a powerful case can be made (of which the outlines are present in Earl Raab and Paul Seabury) for the proposition that a system of proportional representation would in the not-so-long run do great harm to the quality of life in the United States and would even end by harming the very groups for whose short-range benefit this change was originally proposed and is already in some places being implemented. Now wherever the Jewish interest may or may not lie, there can be no question that it lies in the maintenance of the merit system and that the Jews, as a tiny ethnic group, would inevitably be damaged by a system of proportional representation according to group. The fact that the Jews have such an obvious interest in the maintenance of the merit system ought, in the opinion of some, to disqualify them from defending it: they are not, after all, *dis*interested. I, on the contrary, believe that it is just the urgency of their own interest, their own stake, in the merit system that ought to sensitize Jews to its virtues and mobilize them in its defense. They have a duty to themselves to persuade as many people as they can that the principles of the merit system are sound even if some of its practices have to be reformed in the name of the principles themselves; that such a system is neither a racket nor a Jewish invention but a way of realizing certain precious personal and social values which cannot be realized as well under any other set of arrangements. In discharging this duty to themselves, the Jews have an opportunity to perform a service to the country that no one else under present circumstances seems likely to perform.

Looking back on the 1950's and the early 1960's we can now see that being absolved of the need to worry about and press for the Jewish interest—the need to face the world with the humiliating question, *Is it good for the Jews?* perpetually on one's nagging lips—was itself one of the more luxurious perquisites of what may some day come to be considered the Golden Age of Jewish security in America. The Golden Age, as golden ages must, now seems to be reaching an end, and nothing is to be gained by Jews or anyone else from denying the signs in the air. In the brassier age aborning, Jews will either ask, *Is it good for the Jews?* and act on the answers, or else they may wake up one day to find themselves diminished, degraded, discriminated against, and alone. ■

* A brilliant beginning is made by Ben Halpern in his recent book, *Blacks and Jews*, and in his article, "A Program for American Jews," in the November 1971 *Jewish Frontier*.

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Letters from Readers

Cuba & the Revolution

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Gall's article explaining "How Castro Failed" [November 1971] was interesting and informative. I wonder, however, to what extent sound inferences about the present state of the Cuban economy can be drawn from comparisons of absolute or per-capita levels of sugar production during the Castro and pre-Castro eras.

Does the fact that recent harvests fall below earlier performance, both in absolute and in per-capita terms, necessarily indicate that Cuba's economy has retrogressed under Castro? Such a comparison immediately brings to mind the question of how the use of the proceeds from sugar production in the Castro era compares with their use in pre-Castro Cuba. It is at least plausible that per-capita investment deriving from the earnings from sugar sales has been maintained or has increased under Castro in spite of declining levels of production. One also wonders about imports that were financed through sugar sales prior to Castro and how they would compare with present imports.

D. R. VAUGHAN
Alexandria, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Norman Gall's article confirms the fact that the ranks of intellectuals "disaffected" with the Cuban Revolution . . . have gained a new recruit. What a strange coincidence that after thirteen years of Cuban "socialism," a decade of reporting on Latin America, and lengthy personal acquaintance with Cuba, Castro, and the Revolution, Mr. Gall should suddenly see the light—and then thanks to the works of men who have also been under the spell of a Caribbean fascism.

Mr. Gall's belated "objectivity" . . . enables him finally to understand that the "libertarian pretensions" of Castro's Revolution are finished as a result of economic failures, the Padilla affair, and militarization. But, I must ask, what libertarian pretensions? In the first place, seldom has Fidel Castro been anything but frank about his Revolution. As late as September 28, 1968 he stated flatly—as he had done many times before—that "Not even by a hair are we liberals! We are revolutionaries!" Second, I question whether Castro's Revolution ever was within the "Western intellectual tradition," for surely, this tradition has never been defined in terms of prison for over thirty thousand people, censorship, forced labor, and the like. Finally, may I remind Mr. Gall that militarization has been a fact of Cuban life for thirteen years—since 1959 to be exact.

One can easily subscribe to Norman Podhoretz's observation in his "Liberty & the Intellectuals" [Issues, November 1971] that a "certain class" of intellectuals has of late resented Castro's mishandling of the economy, the guerrillas, the arts, and . . . the political prisoners. But I question whether the *real* cause of such disenchantment is the unfulfilled expectations of the Revolution—its "failure" to create a new man, the "unworkable" character of Cuban socialism, the "Stalinist" procedures against a "certain class" of citizens, etc.—or whether the disaffection of the intellectuals stems from their wish to disengage themselves (in the true spirit of "leftist intellectuals") from a tyranny and a tyrant who no longer offers travel, free stays in hotels and resorts, and splendid dinners (and all this, I might add, before the eyes of a starving—sorry, I should say "rationed"—weary, empty, and hopeless people, always excepting the bureaucracy, of course).

But there is more. For the first time in Mr. Gall's decade of reporting about our Americas, he has *discovered* Cuba's political prisoners. What an opportune moment to criticize others for not doing likewise. He even mentions Hubert Matos, the rebel who as early as November 1959 knew that the Cuban Revolution had been betrayed and who for twelve years has been rotting in a rat-hole proudly refusing to be rehabilitated. . . .

We Cubans are known for our tradition of candor and bluntness. In the spirit of that tradition, let me say that I consider Mr. Gall's sudden preoccupation with Cuba

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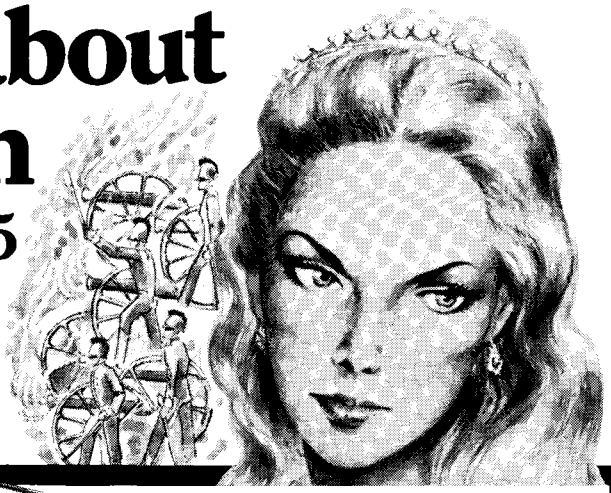

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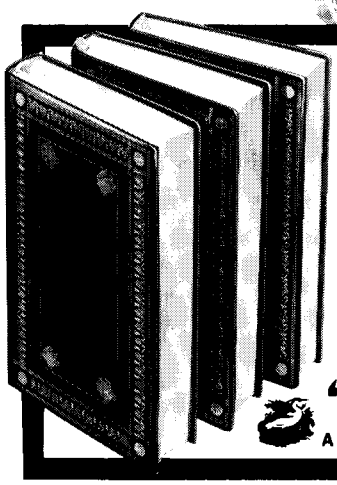

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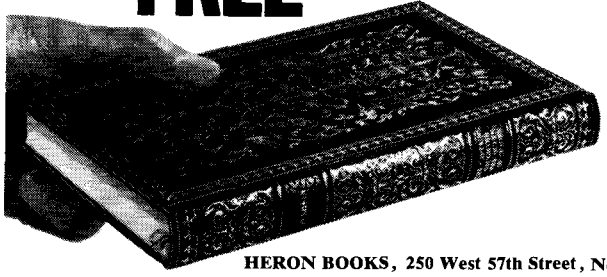

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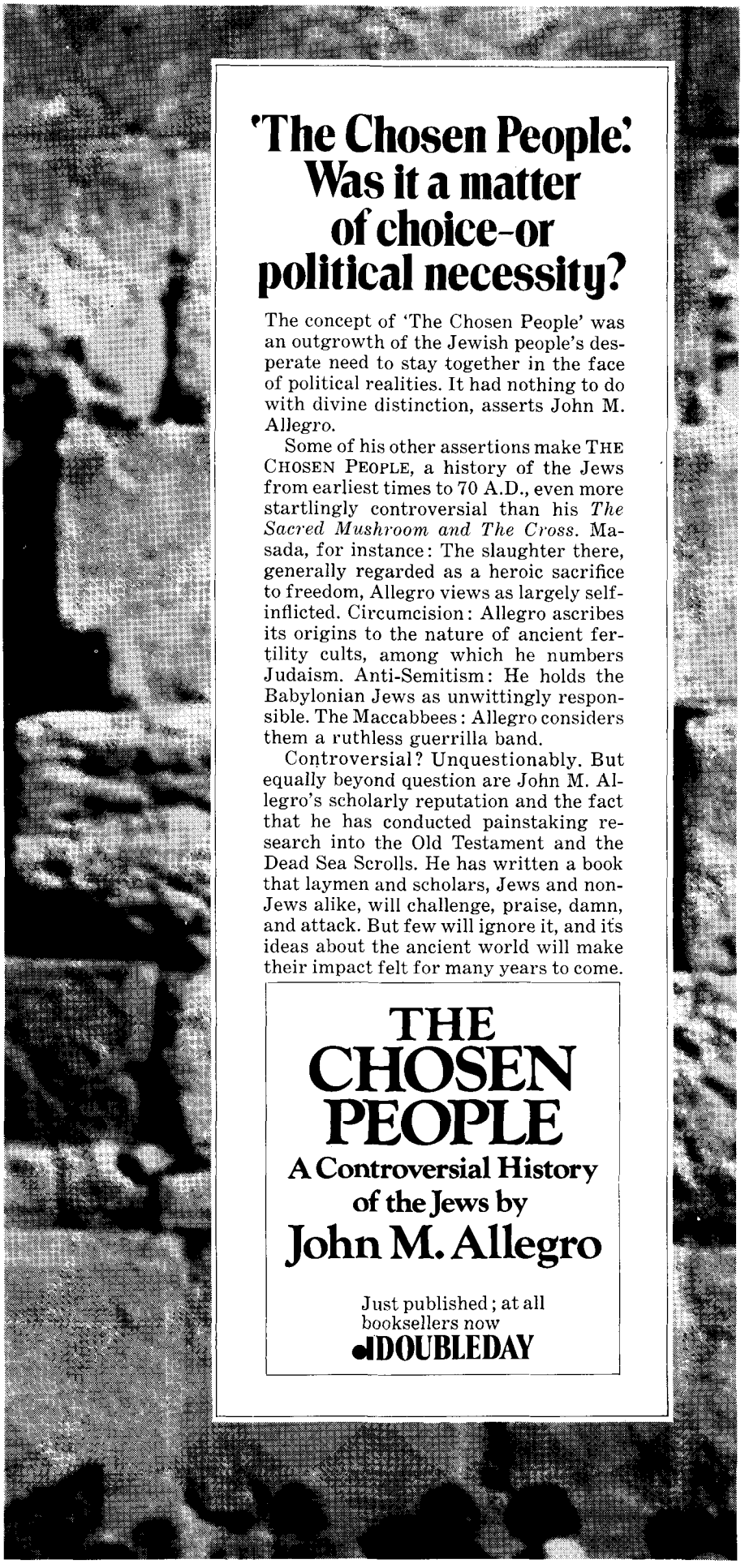
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and her prisoners cynical, opportunistic, and hypocritical. Our Cuban prisoners do not need your belated compassion, Mr. Gall, nor do . . . we need your analysis, based on other people's words, of why Castro failed. . . .If there is to be a trial now, the defendants should be the intellectuals who personally and in writing praised and supported tyranny instead of freedom, deceit instead of truth, and dishonesty instead of dignity.

The real Cuban Revolution, the revolution that will be in the best Western intellectual tradition, is *yet to come, but when it does,* Castro will be judged by Cubans, not by foreigners.

MARTA F. SAN MARTIN
Union City, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I tend to think that even though the pre-Castro regime was efficiently organized (in its agricultural economy) the proceeds were distributed among the wealthier families, and as Norman Gall and many others have mentioned, the rich became richer and the poor became poorer, although Cuba's middle class was a relatively large one. . . . Who benefits today under the Castro regime, and who benefited during the pre-Castro era? . . .

Norman Gall says: "The island has been left with an over-specialized, under-productive export economy that shows a declining capacity to pay for the imported supplies on which it depends even more today."

But is per-capita sugar production really an adequate measure of the state of the island?

ENREA HIGHN
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his otherwise excellent article Norman Gall unwittingly discloses the fact that he was never a farm boy. . . .When the socialist or Communist state expropriates all private capital, farm crops are also considered capital and are expropriated, although the farmer is later given as much as he needs.

But the farmer never considers his crops as capital. He has ploughed the soil and harrowed it and planted the seed and tended the grain and vegetables in sunshine and through storm and wind, from dawn to sunset. . . . And now when the crops have ripened, they

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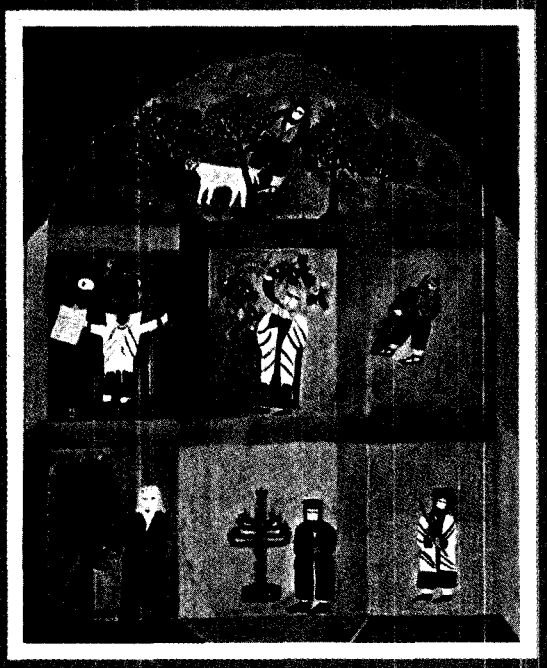

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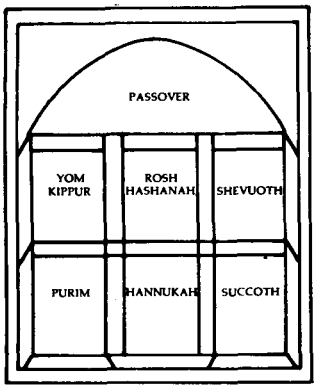

THE HOLIDAYS is typical of Harry Lieberman's joyous treatment of religious themes as he charmingly crowds a lifetime into a single picture, vibrant with color. Naive yet sophisticated, the overall effect can be likened to a Hasidic combination of biblical literalness and inspired symbolism. A faint nostalgia for the teachings of childhood and its lost innocence permeates the entire group despite its paradoxical appearance of stained glass panels in a wood frame.

Harry Lieberman's own life is as fascinating as his paintings, which win high critical praise wherever they are shown. Although he started his painting career late (at the age of 78) and as a primitive, there is nothing amateurish about his work. In fact, the richness of the color and detail in his interpretations of Biblical themes imbue them with great vitality and warmth.

Born in a typical *shtetl*, Gnieveshev, pop. 500, near Warsaw, nephew of the village Rabbi, Harry Lieberman followed the Hasidic Sect of Mystic Ecstasy founded by the Baal-Shem-Tov. He came to this country in 1906 and worked at first as a clothing cutter on the lower East Side of New York. The confectionary business beckoned next, and the one he and his wife started grew and prospered until he retired to Great Neck, New York, in 1950. There his primary interest was chess but, when his chess partner fell ill—Harry Lieberman turned to painting.

Now in his nineties, he is still exhibiting his work in both one-man and group exhibitions; and it is collected both here and abroad by museums, individuals, and institutions.

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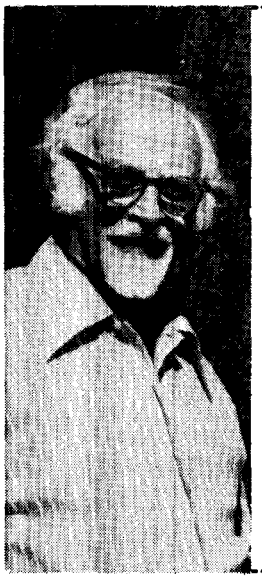

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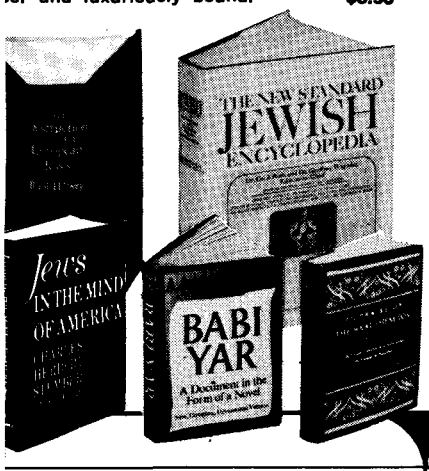

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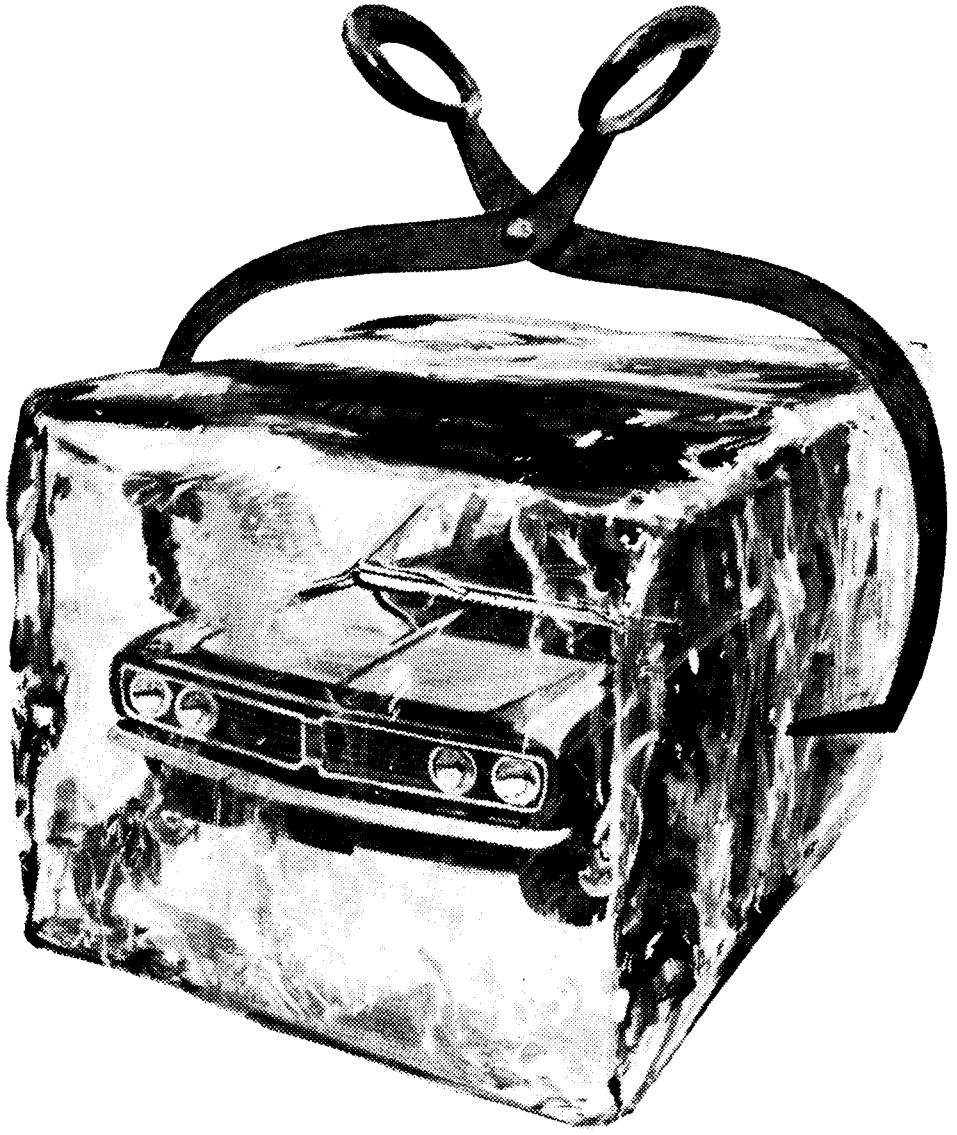

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CHARLES ROLAND
New York City

Moviemakers

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Concerning William S. Pechter's "Block That Cult!" [Movies, November 1971] and his remarks on films directed by Blake Edwards and Sam Peckinpah: there were only two "Sarris-acolytes" who wrote about Edwards's *Wild Rovers* in the *Village Voice*, and I was one of them; also, after diligent searching through all possible outlets, I can find only two "solemn exegeses" of Edwards's *Darling Lili* in "film magazines," and one of them is mine. I therefore assume that Mr. Pechter's intemperate attack on the admirers of Edwards's recent pictures is an attack on me.

That there is an Edwards "cult" and that *Wild Rovers* and Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* have a number of elements in common were ideas first advanced by me, in the *Voice*, in a tongue-in-cheek manner. That Mr. Pechter can take my willingness to mock my own school of film criticism and turn the factors I used against me as if they were his own discoveries strikes me as unconscionable.

As for defenses of both *Wild Rovers* and *Darling Lili*, I refer readers to my own and others' work. But I cannot let pass Mr. Pechter's assumptions regarding the relationship of *Wild Rovers* to the earlier *The Wild Bunch*. "Influence" is not enough for Mr. Pechter, who accuses Edwards of "plagiarism" and even "theft." The facts are otherwise.

When I visited Edwards on the set of *Wild Rovers* in January 1971 he told me that he had written the script while in the hospital for a month in the midst of shooting *Darling Lili* (well before *The Wild Bunch* was released) and that it had undergone very few changes since that time. Later, when I saw a rough assembly of the *Wild Rovers* footage, the subject of its similarity to the Peckinpah film first came up, and Edwards remarked, rightly in my opinion, that as an artist he would be untrue to himself if he altered his conception in order to avert the kind of easy accusation that we now hear from Mr. Pechter. After all, neither Peckinpah nor Edwards was the first to utilize slow-motion death in an American film, and both of them were influenced by Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Mr. Pechter's statement that "*auteuriste*" critics do not like the work of Peckinpah is incredible. Jean-Luc Godard and his colleagues on *Cahiers du Cinéma* were among the discoverers of *Ride the High Country* in 1963. Andrew Sarris may have had doubts about *The Wild Bunch* but he included *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* on his listing of the ten best films of 1970. The British *auteuriste* Peter Wollen includes a listing of his favorite American directors as an appendix to his *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1969); Peckinpah is on the list, and Edwards is not. *Horizons West* (1970), the book by the American *auteuriste* Jim Kitses, is a study of the films of three directors—Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, and Sam Peckinpah. And as for myself, here is the final paragraph of my "exegesis" of *Darling Lili* in the 1970 issue of *On Film*: "Like Arthur Penn, Edwards was born in 1922. The two of them are the youngest American directors to whom the word 'great' can reasonably be applied, at least until we find out whether Stanley Kubrick (1928) and Sam Peckinpah (1926) have more than one masterpiece each up their sleeves."

And as for Mr. Pechter's assumption that they who admire Edwards cannot also admire Vincente Minnelli, I ask him to read

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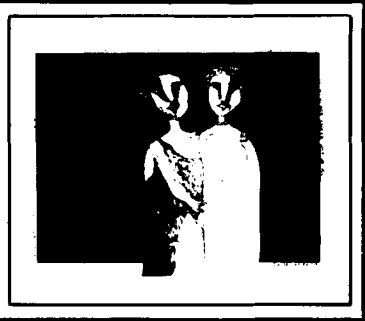

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my article, "On a Clear Day You Can See Minnelli," which is scheduled to appear in a forthcoming issue of the British magazine *Movie.*

STUART BYRON

New York City

WILLIAM S. PECHTER writes:

There's an old gag which has it that one man says to another, "If only Irving Berlin hadn't lived, I'd be a rich man today." "How's that?" asks the other. "Well," the first replies, " 'Blue Skies' is a good song, and, if Irving Berlin hadn't written it, I would have."

No doubt, Blake Edwards would have actually made *The Wild Bunch* if Sam Peckinpah hadn't got there first, though, as I hope my piece makes clear, *Wild Rovers* is really nothing like the earlier film despite the many superficial resemblances (not, I would say, for want of trying), and betrays other "influences" as well. For all I know, Edwards may already be filming his *Citizen Kane,* innocent of all tainting familiarity with anyone else's. Maybe it all comes down to a question of, at best, discretion, at worst, gall. For surely, having seen Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* and realizing that certain things in his own project had been (to put the best possible face on it) "anticipated," he might have considered at least giving his film another title, and not risking the situation of observers as mean-minded and mistrustful as myself *thinking* he may have actually wished to take advantage of an identification with the earlier work.

Having said this, I could hardly expect Mr. Byron to believe (though, ironically, it happens to be true) that, except for the reference to Sarris-acolytes, my piece was written and titled before I came across his (and if I'd wanted to attack him, I would have mentioned his name—I'm not bashful); nevertheless, if the "discovery" that he feels cheated of credit for, is that there is an Edwards cult and *Wild Rovers* has elements in common with *The Wild Bunch,* I am more than willing to grant it to him, and grant him credit also for the discovery in my piece of an assertion that one can't like Edwards and Minnelli too. Mr. Byron is right, of course, in saying that

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Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country* was sympathetically received in *Cahiers du Cinéma*; when I said (to be precise, without reference to "'*auteuriste*' critics") that "among Edwards's admirers, Sam Peckinpah . . . is liable to be held in peculiarly low repute," I had in mind the American elaborators of the *Cahiers* line, and in particular Sarris's sneering entry on Peckinpah (classified under "Oddities, One-Shots, and Newcomers") in his world's longest laundry list, *The American Cinema*: "*Ride the High Country* was considered the sleeper of its year, but was it? . . . it turned out that its director grudgingly accepted Randolph Scott and Joel McCrea and the myths they incarnated simply for the sake of daubs of atmospheric realism from Peckinpah's palette. . . . Since Peckinpah considers himself too intellectual to tell a story, it remains to be seen whether he will be forceful enough to develop a theme." I also was thinking of Sarris's contortionist act in reviewing *The Wild Bunch* (in *Confessions of a Cultist*) and some comments made to me on *The Wild Bunch* by the keeper of the *auteuriste* flame at the New York *Times*.

Readers believing they detect a responsiveness to Peckinpah in the quotation from himself that Mr. Byron includes in his letter simply cannot know how many masterpieces critics of Mr. Byron's school have up their sleeves to be prodigally awarded to their favorites, like Edwards and Penn, "to whom the word 'great' can reasonably be applied," and who are presumably rolling in masterpieces.

But Mr. Byron, it would seem, is unimpressed by small numbers generally. One wonders how many articles must be written on *Wild Rovers* in the *Village Voice* before I'm allowed to pluralize "acolyte," or how many solemn exegeses of *Darling Lili* in the film magazines before I can say, "Consult the film magazines and you will find solemn exegeses of . . . *Darling Lili*." But perhaps Mr. Byron is still being "tongue-in-cheek"; or, as someone once observed, what is too silly to be said can be sung. Apparently, what is too silly to be said seriously (other than in the film magazines) can be said tongue-in-cheek in the *Village Voice*. Which is something to be said in behalf of the *Village Voice*.

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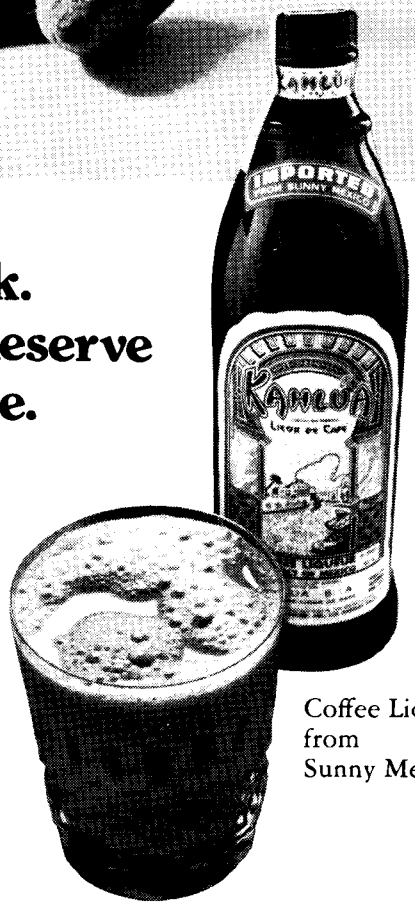

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The Sephardim (Cont'd.)

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Real Grandees" [October 1971] Edouard Roditi says that "one cannot look to *The Grandees* for historical accuracy," and I should like to add that this statement can also be applied to Stephen Birmingham's earlier work, *Our Crowd*. . . .

As for the American Sephardim, to get an accurate picture one should read such works as Tamar and David de Sola Pool's *An Old Faith in the New World* and *Portraits Etched in Stone*; Malcolm Stern's "The Function of Genealogy in American Jewish History," the prolegomenon to his *Americans of Jewish Descent*; and the late Cecil Roth's article, "Were the Sephardim *Hidalgos*?—History Disputes Their Claim to Aristocracy" (COMMENTARY, August 1955). . . .

I would also like to correct Mr. Roditi on one point. He refers to "Aunt Ellie's status-hungry clan," but three New York members of Congregation Shearith Israel who were interviewed by Birmingham told me that he did not take notes when he interviewed them, and when the book appeared, they realized that he had made up some of the conversation attributed to them; in some instances, moreover, Birmingham misquoted them or quoted them out of context. One of them informed me, for example, that Birmingham presented a "distorted picture of Aunt Ellie," who was in fact a serious genealogist, and that this distortion made a "dishonest framework for the book.". . . He added that "all the quotes about the Nathans are concocted from Birmingham's imagination."...

The words of Professor Ellis Rivkin of Hebrew Union College in reviewing one of the books listed in Birmingham's bibliography could apply with equal justice to both of Birmingham's best-sellers: ". . . thousands of readers will find it much easier to absorb [the author's] ignorance than a responsible scholar's learning. One shudders at the thought of a generation nurtured on [the author's] fantasy."...

ISIDORE S. MEYER
Editor, Emeritus
American Jewish Historical Society
New York City

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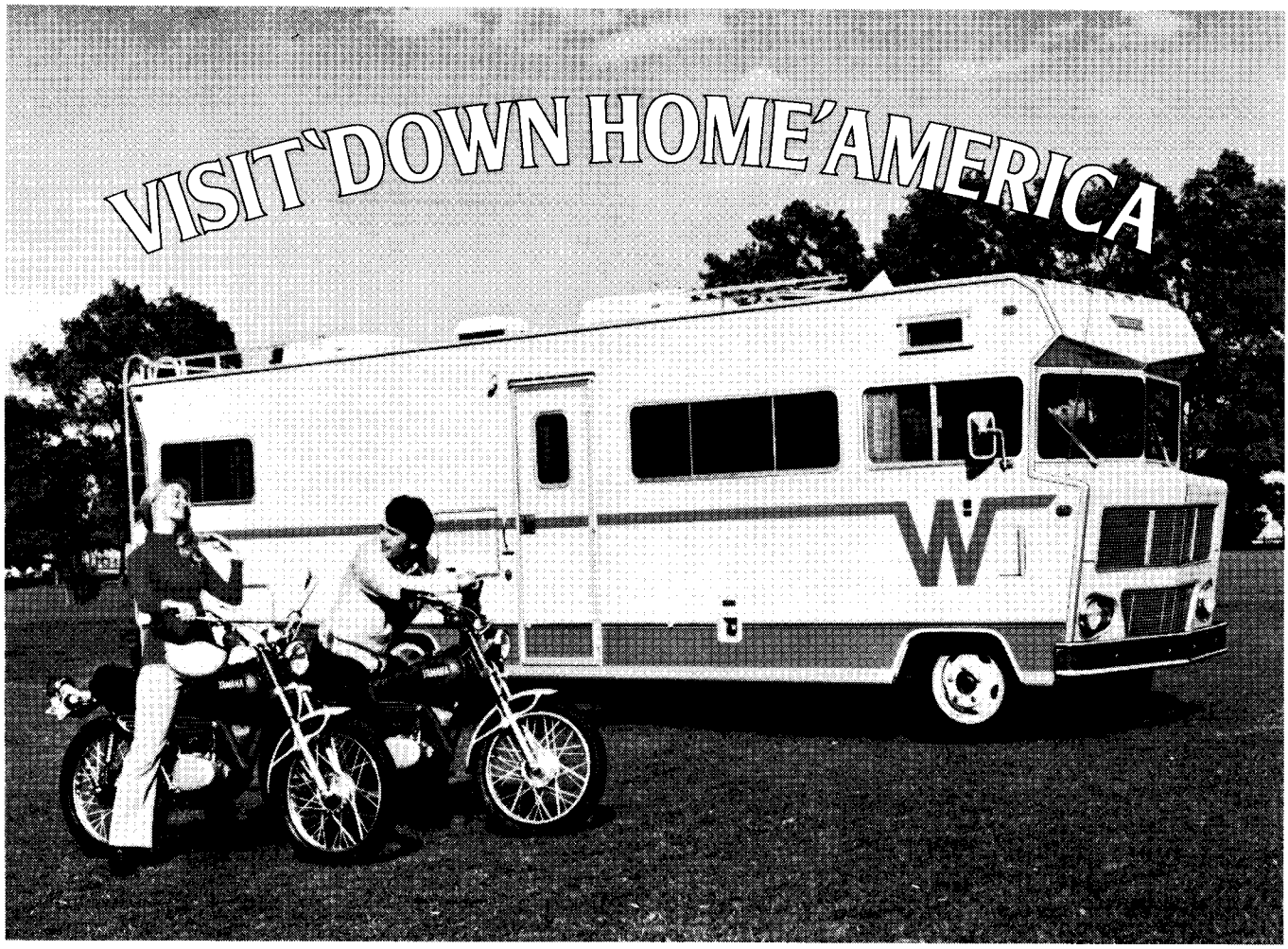

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Malraux

To the Editor of Commentary:

Like so many of Malraux's critics, Renee Winegarten [Malraux's Fate," November 1971] has some difficulty realizing that he is not yet dead. Like Sartre, who is utterly incapable of speaking of Malraux in the present tense, Mrs. Winegarten can only speak of "that great gulf between the world of Malraux and the present day" or else ponder the ironies his life will present to future generations. . . .

But perhaps Mrs. Winegarten is less concerned with presenting a portrait of a man who has been embroiled in the struggle against humiliation all around the globe than she is in delivering a hatchet job. She tells us of a "Nietzschean elitist" who took special delight in the ferocity of his troops while neglecting to add that the same man was a recipient of both the French *Croix de la Libération* and the British Distinguished Service Order. . . .

Mrs. Winegarten makes insinuations about Malraux's hesitation in joining the Resistance . . . but she almost overlooks his service in the Resistance, where he accomplished much more actually fighting than Sartre ever did sitting at his desk. . . . Among other things, Malraux harassed the SS division, *Das Reich*, and impeded its push north to combat the Allied invasion at Normandy.

Mrs. Winegarten interprets Malraux's support of the Gaullist movement of the 50's as a "dislike of parliamentary democracy." It might be more truthful to suggest that Malraux was convinced that France without Gaullism would either go the way of Weimar or, like the Kerensky government, fall into the hands of the Communists.

In the last analysis, what Mrs. Winegarten despises most in Malraux is his reticence about his private life. She is distressed by his unwillingness to elucidate matters that he "could clear up in two seconds if he so wished." Perhaps this is only his reluctance to let people like Mrs. Winegarten play God with his personal affairs. . . .

What is important in a man? His own displeasure with himself, or the things that he manages to accomplish despite this? As Berger's father says in *The Walnut Trees of Altenburg*, "in the shadow of secrecy men achieve equality a little too easily"; but in the light of our struggles for dignity, it is better to discern what makes a man.

Michael W. Zimecki
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . How unlike Renee Winegarten's previous contributions to Commentary is her article on Malraux in which she frivolously indulges in one supposition after another, leading the unwary reader to believe that what is pure conjecture on her part is actually established fact. . . .

What proof, for example, does Mrs. Winegarten offer for questioning Malraux's revolutionary experiences in China: " . . . though his revolutionary experiences (if any) in China remain obscure." Might this statement represent Mrs. Winegarten's parroting of a legend? Or might we assume that she is simply paraphrasing Sidney Braun who writes, in his *Dictionary of French Literature*, "and the legend—true or false [for which Mrs. Winegarten substitutes "if any"]—of his subsequent militant participation in the Chinese Civil War"?

Mrs. Winegarten offers several other difficult-to-prove suppositions: "One can only conclude that he thought literature inferior to ministerial activity"; "probably envisaging a similar role (as 'justifier') for himself"; "there is a resemblance here to another myth-forging adventurer." Malraux is also chastised through inference: "So far he presents a classic case of the conversion of the non-political man of letters to political involvement." But was it not Anatole France who made a similar conversion at the age of fifty-two? . . .

One might also become suspicious of Mrs. Winegarten's value judgments when one reads that "what he [Malraux] is proposing tends to sound finer than it really is." But what is *her* standard of excellence? . . .

Only one clue to Mrs. Winegarten's metamorphosis (from her previous scholarly efforts) exists, and that appears when she says: "Many have enumerated without much difficulty all that is missing from his novels, including the value of woman (reduced at worst to the role of sexual object and at best to that of mourner of dead heroes) as distinct from the value of man." Are we to consider then that . . . her aspirations—originating perhaps in current Women's-Liberation pressures—toward equal recognition as a writer have led Mrs. Winegarten to unshackle herself from the restraints of earlier years which had caused her to refrain from denigrating Malraux, impugning his character, and belittling his creative efforts? Or are we to guess at some more personal vendetta? . . .

None of the foregoing is intended in any manner to argue that Malraux is not deserving of the verbal invectives Renee Winegarten has so deftly hurled at him, but rather to suggest that the attack seems to have been unwarranted.

Charles Varga, M.D.
Portland, Oregon

Renee Winegarten writes:

As distinct from his activities in Indochina, Malraux's actions in China remain a subject of controversy, and his biographers and critics make great use of the subjunctive when alluding to them. Those interested in the possibilities may consult (among others) W. M. Frohock, *André Malraux and the Tragic Imagination*, p. 14 ff.; Walter G. Langlois, *André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure*, p. 157; Robert Payne, *A Portrait of André Malraux*, pp. 132-3, 452-3; Janine Mossuz, *André Malraux et le Gaullisme*, p. 246. Janine Mossuz questioned the novelist on this very subject in August 1967, and she writes that "André Malraux proved rather evasive." It was to such matters that I referred when I wrote that he could clear them up in two seconds if he so desired, not to his tragic private life which I did not discuss at all. As regards Malraux's oft-expressed distaste for liberal parliamentary democracy, here I can only point to his works and speeches and to the detailed examination of his political views by Janine Mossuz. I am amused that my allusion to his treatment of women in his novels should be attributed to my sudden conversion to Women's Lib, my attitude being old-fashioned feminist rather than modern militant. Nowhere do I impugn Malraux's war record: on the contrary, I express admiration for his personal bravery and qualities of leadership. Invective? Attack? Vendetta? I fear my crime has been to treat as a human being one who remains, for varying reasons, a legendary hero in the eyes of some of his devotees. Personally, I find the former the more intriguing figure.

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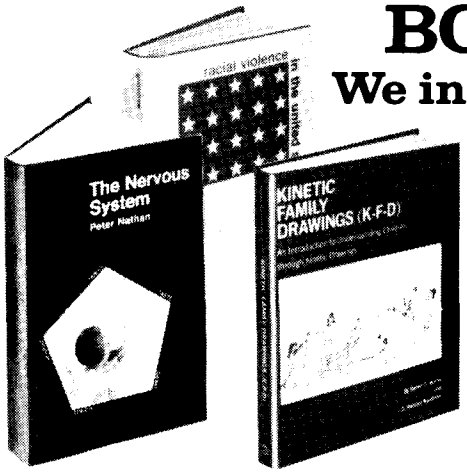

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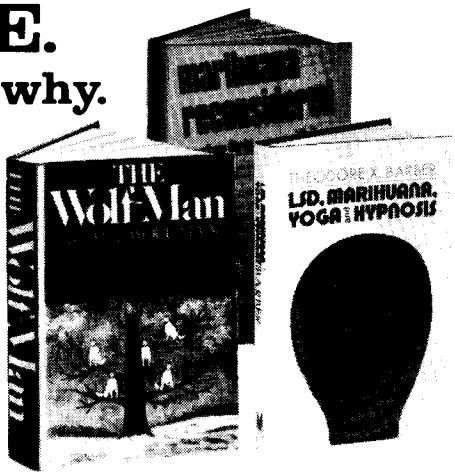

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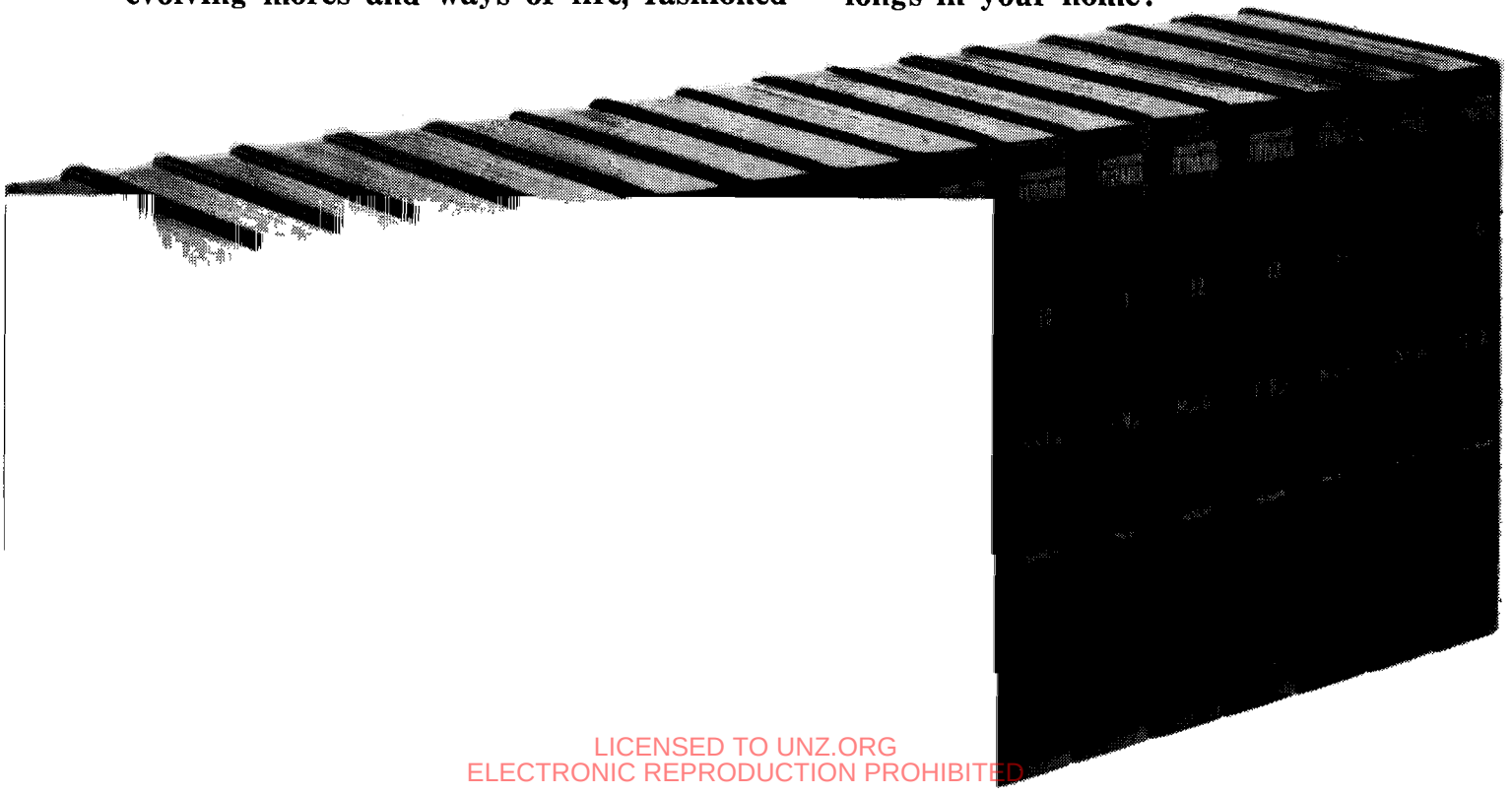

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Yiddish Scholarship

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was surprised to find that in his otherwise insightful "Of Fish and People" [December 1971] Milton Himmelfarb repeats two hoary myths that careful research has quietly exploded.

That Yiddish shows a "striking poverty" in names for plants and animals is an exaggeration common among 19th-century *maskilim* who ridiculed the traditional *melamed*'s glossing of biblical names for then unknown species of flora and fauna as merely *a min geviks/khaye,* "a kind of plant/animal." Yet a Yiddish-English-Latin botanical dictionary soon to be published by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research lists over two thousand Yiddish terms for trees, shrubs, and flowers. As for animal names, let one example suffice: the 510 Yiddish names for birds in H. Kozakevitsh, *"Nomenklatur fun feyglen," Di yidishe shprakh,* Kiev, 1928.

Dzhudezmo (Ladino) is much older than the 15th century. For various reasons, the age of the so-called *"galut"* languages was minimized in by now obsolete research. Thus, Yiddish was said to have originated only when Ashkenazim settled en masse on Slavic territory ("In Germany they spoke impeccable German; only after being cut off from German Kultur [!] did their language degenerate into a piggish jargon"). It was likewise believed that Dzhudezmo dated only from after the 1492 Exile, though Romance scholars have slowly been collecting cogent evidence for the pre-exilic origin of this language (e.g., Leo Spitzer, "The Origin of the Judeo-Romance Languages," *Yivo-bleter* XIV).

DAVID L. GOLD
Benyumen Shekhter Foundation
for the Advancement of Standard Yiddish
Bronx, New York

MILTON HIMMELFARB writes:

David Gold complains that I ascribe to Yiddish a striking poverty in names for plants and animals. Not I, Maurice Samuel—whose *In Praise of Yiddish* was admired by Lucy S. Dawidowicz in the same issue of COMMENTARY. The Rabbis tell us that someone who says something in the name of the man who first said it helps bring redemption to the world. "Maurice Samuel," I wrote, "has shown us the striking poverty of Yiddish in names for the plants and the animate beings, etc." The reference is to Samuel's *World of Sholom Aleichem* (first edition, 1943), pp. 193 ff:

> Yiddish, the language of Sholom Aleichem's world, is a folk language; but unlike all other folk languages it has not a base in nature. It is poor, almost bankrupt, by comparison with other languages, in the vocabulary of field and forest and stream. . . . Yiddish purists will, of course, find words for perch and trout in the dictionary. The point is that only the exceptional Yiddish scholar, never the ordinary, intelligent, Yiddish-speaking Kasrielevkite, would know about it.

Almost a half-century ago David Blondheim's *Les Parlers judéo-romans et la Vetus Latina* posited Judeo-Romance languages, deriving from a kind of ancestral Judeo-Latin. But so far from being in the ascendant, this theory appears to be in decline: see now, for a significant test-case and a review of the literature (Blondheim, together with Umberto Cassuto's asserted Judeo-Italian and Giuliana Fiorentino's denial, "General Problems of Judeo-Romance. . . ," *Jewish Quarterly Review,* XLII, 1951), Vittore Colorni, *"La parlata degli ebrei mantovani,"* in the *Volume speciale in memoria di Attilio Milano* (= *Rassegna mensile di Israel,* July-September 1970).

A linguist is a scientist, and should not bully people. He should not put pressure on them to pretend they believe some language is more ancient than they really believe, lest they be suspected of despising it as a piggish jargon. I assure Mr. Gold that the last epithet I would apply to any Jewish language—or dialect, or even *zhargon*—is "piggish."

Admiration

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I should like to record my unstinted admiration for . . . Wilson Carey McWilliams's review of *Bryan* by Louis W. Koenig [Books in Review, November 1971]. It revealed not only a profound knowledge of Bryan and the Populists, but a courage, in its point of view, such as one almost never sees.

JANET SMITH
New York City

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HEW & the Universities

Paul Seabury

OLD Howard Smith, Virginia swamp fox of the House Rules Committee, was a clever tactical fighter. When Dixiecrats in 1964 unsuccessfully tried to obstruct passage of the Civil Rights bill, Smith in a fit of inspired raillery devised a perverse stratagem. He proposed an amendment to the bill, to include women as an object of federal protection in employment, by adding sex to the other criteria of race, color, national origin, and religion as illegitimate grounds for discrimination in hiring. This tactical maneuver had far-reaching effects; calculated to rouse at least some Northern masculine ire against the whole bill, it backfired by eliciting a chivalrous rather than (as we now call it) sexist response: the amendment actually passed!

Smith, however, had greater things in mind for women's rights. As a fall-back strategy, they would distract federal bureaucrats from the principal object of the bill, namely, to rectify employment inequities for Negroes. In this, at least in higher education, Smith's stratagem is paying off according to expectations. The middle-range bureaucrats staffing the HEW Civil Rights office, under its Director, J. Stanley Pottinger, now scent sexism more easily than racism in the crusade to purify university hiring practices. Minority-group spokesmen grumble when this powerful feminine competitor appears, to horn in. In the dynamics of competition between race and sex for scarce places on university faculties, a new hidden crisis of higher education is brewing. As universities climb out of the rubble of campus disorders of the 1960's, beset by harsh budgetary reverses, they now are required to redress national social injustices within their walls at their own expense. Compliance with demands from the federal government to do this would compel a stark remodeling of their criteria of recruitment, their ethos of professionalism, and their standards of excellence. Refusal to comply satisfactorily would risk their destruction.

The story of how this came about, and what it portends, is a complex one, so complex that it is hard to know where to begin. It is also an unpleasant tale. Only its first chapters can be written.

PAUL SEABURY is professor of political science at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of, most recently, *The Rise and Decline of the Cold War*.

I

LET US begin the story, then, with a brief history of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act, in the view of its principal sponsors, purposed (among other things) to engage the force of the federal government in battle to diminish or to rectify discriminatory hiring practices in firms and institutions having or seeking contracts with the federal government. Title VII of the act expressly forbids discrimination by employers on grounds of race, color, religion, and national origin, either in the form of preferential hiring or advancement, or in the form of differential compensation. Contracting institutions deemed negligent in complying with these provisions could be deemed ineligible for such contracts, or their contracts could be suspended, terminated, or not renewed.

When Title VII was debated in the Senate, some opponents of it, asserting (in the words of a Washington *Star* editorial) that it was a "draftsman's nightmare," voiced alarm that it might be used for discriminatory purposes, and employers might be coerced into hiring practices which might, in fact, violate the equal-protection doctrine of the Constitution, thus perversely reversing the stated purposes of the bill. In one significant interchange, this alarm, raised by Florida's Senator Smathers, was genially dismissed by Senator Humphrey, in words which bear recalling:

> MR. HUMPHREY: [T]he Senator from Florida is so convincing that when he speaks, as he does, with the ring of sincerity in his voice and heart, and says that an employee should be hired on the basis of his ability—
>
> MR. SMATHERS: Correct.
>
> MR. HUMPHREY: And that an employer should not be denied the right to hire on the basis of ability and should not take into consideration race—how right the Senator is. . . .
>
> But the trouble is that these idealistic pleadings are not followed by some sinful mortals. There are some who do not hire solely on the basis of ability. Doors are closed; positions are closed; unions are closed to people of color. That situation does not help America. . . .
>
> I know that the Senator from Florida desires to help America, industry and enterprise. We ought to adopt the Smathers doctrine, which

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is contained in Title VII. I never realized that I would hear such an appropriate description of the philosophy behind Title VII as I have heard today.

MR. SMATHERS: Mr. President, the Senator from Minnesota has expressed my doctrine completely. . . .

The first steps in implementing the new act were based on executive orders of the President corresponding to Humphrey's Smathers Doctrine. President Johnson's Executive Order No. 11375 (1967) stated that

> The contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The contractor *will take affirmative action* [italics added] to ensure that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Under such plausible auspices, "affirmative action" was born, and with a huge federal endowment to guarantee its success in life. Since 1967, however, this child prodigy—like Charles Addams's famous nursery boy with the test tubes—has been experimenting with novel brews, so as to change both his appearance and his behavior. And it is curious to see how the singleminded pursuers of an ideal of equity can overrun and trample the ideal itself, while injuring innocent bystanders as well.

II

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION was altered by a Labor Department order (based not on the Civil Rights Act but on revised Presidential directives) only months after the Johnson order was announced. This order reshaped it into a weapon for discriminatory hiring practices. If the reader will bear with a further recitation of federal prose, let me introduce Order No. 4, Department of Labor:

> An affirmative-action program is a set of specific and result-oriented procedures to which a contractor commits himself to apply every good faith effort. The objective of these procedures plus such efforts is equal employment opportunity. Procedures without effort to make them work are meaningless; and effort, undirected by specific and meaningful procedures, is inadequate. An acceptable affirmative-action program must include an analysis of areas within which the contractor is deficient in the utilization of minority groups and women, and further, *goals and timetables to which the contractor's good faith efforts must be directed to correct the deficiencies and thus, to increase materially the utilization of minorities and women, at all levels and in all segments of his work force where deficiencies exist.*

This directive is now applicable through HEW enforcement procedures to universities by delegation of authority from the Labor Department. By late 1971, something of a brushfire, fanned by hard-working HEW compliance officers, had spread through American higher education, the cause of it being the demand that universities, as a condition of obtaining or retaining their federal contracts, establish hiring goals based upon race and sex.

III

UNIVERSITIES, for a variety of singular reasons, are extremely vulnerable to this novel attack. As President McGill of Columbia remarked recently, "We are no longer in all respects an independent private university." As early as 1967, the federal government was annually disbursing contract funds to universities at the rate of three-and-a-half billion dollars a year; recently the Carnegie Commission suggested that federal contract funding be increased by 1978 to thirteen billion dollars, if universities are to meet their educational objectives. Individual institutions, notably great and distinguished ones, already are extraordinarily dependent on continuing receipt of federal support. The University of California, for instance, currently (1970-71) depends upon federal contract funds for approximately $72 million. The University of Michigan, periodically harassed by HEW threats of contract suspension, cancellation, or non-renewal, would stand to lose as much as $60 million per annum. The threat of permanent disqualification, if consummated, could wholly wreck a university's prospects for the future.

In November 1971, HEW's Office for Civil Rights announced its intent to institute proceedings for Columbia's permanent debarment—*even though no charges or findings of discrimination had been made*: Columbia had simply not come up with an acceptable affirmative-action program to redress inequities which had not even been found to exist. When minor officials act like Alice in Wonderland's Red Queen, using threats of decapitation for frivolous purposes; when they act as investigator, prosecutor, and judge rolled into one, there may be no cause for surprise. But one can certainly wonder how even they would dare pronounce sentence—and a sentence of death at that—even before completion of the investigatory phase. Such, however, appears to be the deadly logic of HEW procedures. As J. Stanley Pottinger, chief of HEW's office, said at a West Coast press conference recently, "We have a whale of a lot of power and we're prepared to use it if necessary." In known circumstances of its recent use, the threat resembles the deployment of MIRV missiles to apprehend a suspected embezzler.

IV

As the federal government of the United States moves uncertainly to establish equitable racial patterns in universities and colleges, it does so with few guidelines from

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historical experience. The management, manipulation, and evaluation of quotas, targets, and goals for preferential hiring are certainly matters as complex as are the unusual politics which such announced policies inspire. How equitably to assuage the many group claimants for preference, context-by-context, occasion-by-occasion, and year-by-year, as these press and jostle among themselves for prior attention in preference, must by now occasion some puzzlement even among HEW bureaucrats. On a recent Inspector General's tour of California, J. Stanley Pottinger found himself giving comfort to militant women at Boalt Hall Law School of the University of California; yet at Hayward State College, he was attacked by Chicanos for giving preference to blacks! Leaders of militant groups, needless to say, are less interested in the acute dilemmas posed to administrators by this adventure than in what they actually want for themselves. (When at Michigan I raised with a Women's Commission lady the question of whether an actual conflict-of-interest might exist between blacks and women, she simply dismissed the matter: that's for an administrator to figure out.) How to arrive at some distant utopian day, when "underutilization" of minorities or women has "disappeared," is as difficult to imagine as the nature of the ratios that will apply on that day.*

V

FIFTEEN years ago, David Riesman in his *Constraint and Variety in American Education* pointed to certain qualities which distinctively characterized avant-garde institutions of higher learning in this country. The world of scholarship, he said, "is democratic rather than aristocratic in tone, and scholars are made, not born." A "certain universalizing quality in academic life" resulted from the existence of disciplines which "can lift us out of our attachments to home and mother, to our undergraduate alma mater, too, and attach us instead to the new country of Biophysics or the old of Medieval History." In America, the relative decline of ethnic and social-class snobberies and discrimination, combined with immense expansion of the colleges, drew into scholarship a great majority whose backgrounds were distinctly unscholarly. "The advancing inner frontier of science," he wrote, had for many taken the place which the Western frontier served for earlier pioneers. The loyalty which the new democratic scholar showed to his discipline signalled a kind of "non-territorial nationalism." In contrast to his European counterparts, the American scholar found few colleagues among the mass of undergraduates on the basis either of "a common culture or a common ideology in the political or eschatological sense." Paradoxically this democratization of the university (with its stress not on status but upon excellence in performance) had not begun in rank-and-file small colleges of the nation, which were exemplars of America's ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. Rather it had come out of those innovating institutions which, in quest of excellence, either abandoned or transcended much of their discriminatory sociological parochialism. It was the denominational college, where deliberate discrimination according to sex, religion, color, and culture continued to be practiced in admissions and faculty recruitment, which made up the rear of the snake-like academic procession. The egalitarianism of excellence, a democracy of performance, was an ethos consummated by the avant-garde. Riesman labelled the disciplines of the great universities the "racecourses of the mind."

Felix Frankfurter, who went from CCNY to Harvard Law School, was equally impressed with how the system worked. "What mattered," he wrote, "was excellence in your profession to which your father or your face was equally irrelevant. And so rich man, poor man were just irrelevant titles to the equation of human relations. The thing that mattered was what you did professionally. . . ." As he saw the merit system, the alternative to it had to be "personal likes and dislikes, or class, or color, or religious partialities or antipathies. . . . These incommensurable things give too much room for personal preferences and on the whole make room for unworthy and irrelevant biases."

The greatest boost to America's universities came in the 1930's from European emigré scholars whose powerful influence (notably in the sciences and social sciences) is still felt even today. As exemplars of learning, their impact upon young and parochial American students was profound.† Thanks in part to them, by the 1950's the great American universities attained an authentic cosmopolitanism of scholarship matched by no other university system in the world. And the outward reach of American higher education toward the best the world of scholarship could offer generated an inward magnetism, attracting to itself the most qualified students who could be found to study with these newly renowned faculties.

This system of recruitment also left a myriad of American sociological categories statistically underrepresented in the highest precincts of American higher education. Today, with respect to race and ethnicity, blacks, Irish, Italians, Greeks, Poles, and all other Slavic groups (including Slovaks, Slovenes, Serbs, Czechs, and Croatians) are underrepresented. On faculties, at least, women are underrepresented. Important religious categories are underrepresented. The great Catholic universities,

* When I asked an administrator at San Francisco State College what "underutilization" of minorities meant, he simply replied, "Experience will let us know."

† It is now sometimes said, on behalf of preferential recruitment of less-qualified minority faculty, that minority students require *examples* whom "their community" can respect. Whether in practice this would, as claimed, stimulate their performance, is hard to say. The most stimulating exemplary professors I encountered as a student had quite different "socio-economic" backgrounds from mine. Many were even foreigners. It seems almost foolish to have to mention this.

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until recently, have stood aside from the mainstream of secular higher education; they have been enclaves of a separated scholarship. Thus few Catholics are to be found in the roster of distinguished faculties of America's great secular universities, even though Catholics comprise perhaps 30 per cent of the population. And it is interesting to note that the quest for professional excellence in some respects has militated against the achievement of group parities: among those women's colleges which had obtained by the 1950's an enviable academic status as being more than *apartheid* seminaries, one apparent "price" of scholarly excellence was the rapid infusion of male faculty.

And then, on the other hand, there are the Jews. For a long time, administrators of some of America's universities, aware of the powerful scholarly competition which Jewish students and scholars posed, and the social "inequities" which their admission or recruitment might pose, established protective quotas—the famous *numerus clausus*—to keep their numbers down. Yale Law School, for example, abandoned its Jewish quota for incoming students only in the 1950's. With the triumph of equal opportunity over quotas, the bastions of discrimination collapsed. It is estimated that Jews make up about 3 per cent of the population. Clearly they constitute a vastly greater proportion than that on the faculties of America's greatest universities, especially in the social sciences, mathematics, and the humanities.

One could enlarge this catalogue of statistical disparities indefinitely. Yet I must also mention the political, although it is seldom touched upon. The partisan complexion of universities is a matter which HEW does not, and cannot, attend to. Still, I would point out that the faculty of my department at Berkeley, for example, very large by any standards, had to the best of my knowledge three Republicans on it a few years ago; two have since left, one by retirement and one by resignation. There is one new convert, who switched registration to vote for Senator Kuchel in the GOP primary and against Max Rafferty and found, after conversion, that he enjoyed the notoriety which his deviance produced. So, currently we have two Republicans in a department of thirty-eight. This situation is in no way unique. Yet I doubt that even Nixon's HEW crusaders for equality of results would tread into this minefield of blatant inequity. On the other hand, one wonders whether, in White House garrets, there are not some among the President's Republican equerry who take perverse pleasure in watching academic liberals, crusaders for social justice for others, now hoist by their own petard on home territory.

VI

THE ironic potentials in affirmative action might have been foreseen had American lawmakers and administrators known the results which in recent years have plagued the government of India's pursuit of a quite similar goal. Here, perhaps more clearly than in any other contemporary culture, the idea that social justice can be reached via quotas and preferences has led almost inexorably to extremes of absurdity.

Before independence, under British rule, special privileges to communities and castes were given or withheld under the British *raj* both to rectify inequities and (as in the instance of the Muslims) to punish disloyalty or reward support. Commencing in legislatures as the establishment of reserved seats for privileged groups—first for Muslims, then for Anglo-Indians, then for Indian Christians—the principle of privileged representation soon spread into other sectors of public life.

When in the early 1930's B. R. Ambedkar, leader of the Untouchables, demanded that the British establish preferential electoral quotas for them, Gandhi objected, arguing that the interests of the Untouchables would better be advanced by integrating them into society than by protecting them with preferential treatment. Gandhi believed that preference would heighten identity of caste rather than diminish it, and that it further risked creating vested-interest minorities. Yet in negotiations with the British, Ambedkar won and Gandhi lost. After independence, the government of India backtracked, abolishing preferential treatment for all groups except tribal peoples and scheduled castes (i.e., Untouchables) who were accorded certain preferences in government recruitment and in access to educational institutions, fellowships, and admissions. Such preferences, originally instituted as temporary devices, soon became institutionalized, and again they spread. So-called "backward classes" proliferated to the point where it became necessary to be designated as "backward" in order to become privileged. And, indeed, in 1964, a "Backwardness Commission" recommended in the state of Mysore that every group except two (the Brahmins and the Lingayats) be officially designated as backward!

The Indian experience clearly shows that when access to privilege is defined on ethnic-community lines, the basic issue of individual rights is evaded; new privileges arise; caste privilege sabotages the principle of equality; the polity further fragments; and the test of performance is replaced by the test of previous status. (In Kanpur, recently, the son of a wealthy Jat family applied for admission to the Indian Institute of Technology and was rejected on objective criteria; then he reapplied as a member of an ethnically-scheduled caste, and on this basis was admitted.)

VII

TO REMAIN eligible for federal contracts under the new procedures, universities must devise package proposals, containing stated targets for preferential hiring on grounds of race and sex. HEW may reject these goals, giving the university thirty-day notice for swift rectifica-

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tion, even though no charges of discrimination have been brought. Innocence must either be quickly proved, or acceptable means of rectification devised. But how does one *prove* innocence?

"Hiring practices" (i.e., faculty recruitment procedures) are decentralized; they devolve chiefly upon departments. At Columbia, for instance, 77 units generate proposals for recruitment. Faculties resent (most of the time quite properly) attempts of administrators to tell them whom to hire, and whom not. Departments rarely keep records of the communications and transactions which precede the making of an employment offer, except as these records pertain to the individual finally selected. Still, the procedure is time-consuming and expensive. The Department of Economics of the San Diego campus of the University of California estimates that it costs twenty to forty man hours, plus three to five hundred dollars, to screen *one* candidate sufficiently to make an offer. Typically, dozens of candidates are reviewed in earlier stages.

Compliance data thus tend to be scanty and incomplete. "Columbia's problem," President McGill recently observed, "is that it is difficult to prove what we do because it is exceedingly difficult to develop the data base on which to show, in the depth and detail demanded [by HEW], what the University's personnel activities in fact are." Yet HEW demands such data from universities on thirty-day deadlines, with contract suspension threatened. Moreover, on its finding of discrimination (usually based on statistical, not qualitative, evidence), it may demand plans for rectification which oblige the university to commit itself to abstract preferential goals without regard to the issue of individual merit.

The best universities, which also happen to be those upon which HEW has chiefly worked its knout, habitually and commonsensically recruit from other best institutions. The top universities hire the top 5 per cent of graduate students in the top ten universities. This is the "skill pool" they rely upon. Some may now deem such practices archaic but they have definitely served to maintain quality. Just as definitely they have not served to obtain "equality of results" in terms of the proportional representation of sociological categories. Such equality assumes that faculties somehow must "represent" designated categories of people on grounds other than those of professional qualification. As Labor Department Order No. 4 states, special attention "should be given to academic, experience and skill requirements, to ensure that the requirements in themselves do not constitute inadvertent discrimination." Indeed, according to four professors at Cornell writing in the *Times* (Letters to the Editor, January 6), deans and department chairmen have been informed by that university's president that HEW policy means the " 'hiring of additional minority persons and females' even if 'in many instances, it may be necessary to hire unqualified or marginally qualified people.' "

If departments abandon the practice of looking to the best pools from which they can hope to draw, then quality must in fact be jeopardized. To comply with HEW orders, every department must come up not with the *best* candidate, but with the best-qualified *woman* or *non-white* candidate. For when a male or a white candidate is actually selected or recommended, it is now incumbent on both department and university to *prove* that no qualified woman or non-white was found available. Some universities already have gone so far in emulating the federal bureaucracy as to have installed their own bureaucratic monitors, in the form of affirmative-action coordinators, to screen recommendations for faculty appointments before final action is taken.

A striking contradiction exists between HEW's insistence that faculties prove they do not discriminate and its demand for goals and timetables which require discrimination to occur. For there is no reason to suppose that equitable processes in individual cases will automatically produce results which are set in the timetables and statistical goals universities are now required to develop. If all that HEW wishes is evidence that universities are bending over backward to be fair, why should it require them to have statistical goals at all? Do they know something no one else knows, about where fairness inevitably leads?

Yet another facet of HEW's procedures goes to the very heart of faculty due process: its demand of the right of access to faculty files, when searching for evidence of discrimination. Such files have always been the most sacrosanct documents of academia, and for good reason: it has been assumed that candor in the evaluation of candidates and personnel is best guaranteed by confidentiality of comment; and that evasiveness, caution, smoke-screening, and grandstanding—which would be the principal consequences of open files—would debase standards of judgment. In the past, universities have denied federal authorities—the FBI for instance—access to these files. Now HEW demands access. And it is the recent reluctance of the Berkeley campus of the University of California to render unto this agent of Caesar what was denied to previous agents, which occasioned the HEW ultimatum of possible contract suspension: $72 million. One might imagine the faculty would be in an uproar, what with Nixon's men ransacking the inner temple. But no. In this as in other aspects of this curious story, the faculty is silent.

VIII

"IN RESPECT of civil rights, common to all citizens, the Constitution of the United States does not, I think, permit any public authority to know the race of those entitled to be protected in the enjoyment of such rights. . . . Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens." This is Justice Harlan, dissenting in Plessy *v.* Ferguson in 1896,

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when the Supreme Court endorsed the "separate but equal" doctrine.

Some of us in the league of lost liberals are still wont to say that the Constitution is color-blind. Yet now under the watchful eye of federal functionaries, academic administrators are compelled to be as acutely sensitive as Kodachrome to the outward physical appearance of their faculty members and of proposed candidates for employment. Forms supplying such information are now fed into data-processing machines; print-outs supply ethnic profiles of departments, colleges, and schools, from which compliance reports may be sent to HEW, and university affirmative-action goals are approved or rejected.*

All of this is done in some uneasiness of mind, to put it mildly. In many states, Harlan-like blue-laws of a recent innocent epoch still expressly prohibit employers from collecting and maintaining data on prospective employees with respect to race, religion, and national origin. The crafty practices contrived to elude the intention of such laws while at the same time complying with HEW, vary from campus to campus. At the University of Michigan, the procedure entails what is known as "self-designation"—the employee indicates on a form the race or ethnic group of which he considers himself a part.† These forms are collected and grouped according to job-classifications, departments, etc., and then they are burned, so as to disappear without a trace. Other universities, less anxious to cover their traces, simply file the forms separately from regular personnel files, without the names of the individuals concerned. In New York, the CUNY system resorts to a quite different practice invented and perfected by South African Boers: "visual identification." Affirmative-action coordinators are told to proceed as follows: "The affirmative-action inventory is to be done by a *visual* survey [italics in original]. There *should not be a notation of any kind* as to ethnic background in either personnel records or permanent files. This is against the law. . . . Identification of Italian Americans will be done visually and by name. . . . Please remember, however, that each individual is to be listed in only one ethnic group."

The number of categories established on behalf of affirmative action, though at present finite, already betrays accordion-like expansibility. The affirmative-action program at San Francisco State College, typical of most, is now confined to six racial groups: Negroes; Orientals; other Non-White; persons of Mexican, Central or South American ancestry ("except those who have physical characteristics of Negro, Oriental, or other Non-White races"); Native American (American Indian); and All Others, ". . . including those commonly designated as Caucasian or White." All but the last category are eligible for discriminatory preference.**

As the above CUNY memorandum signals, however, this last category of "those commonly designated as Caucasian or White" is a Pandora's box inside a Pandora's box. Now that the Italians have escaped from it in New York, the lid is open for others—all the many different groups now fashionably known as "ethnics"—to do likewise. A far-seeing administrator, even as under HEW's gun he hastily devises future-oriented hiring quotas ("goals") to muffle the noise of one or two squeaky wheels, might wonder how he will be able to gratify subsequent claimants on the dwindling capital of reserved quotas still at his disposal.

Yet the administrator in practice has no choice but to act on the "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" principle. HEW ultimata, when they come, are imperious and immediate. Thirty-day rectifications are in order. At Johns Hopkins, MIT, Columbia, Michigan, and the University of California, an acute agony arises from no such philosophical long-range speculations, but from how to put together attractive compliance reports fast enough to avoid the threatened withholding of vast funds, the closing-down of whole facilities, the dismissal of thousands of staff workers, and the irreparable damage done to important ongoing research, especially to laboratory experiments. Crocodile tears do flow, from the gimlet-eyes of HEW investigators, who observe these sufferings from distant federal offices. Even J. Stanley Pottinger recently noted, in appropriate Pentagonese, that the act of contract suspension at Berkeley, for instance, might constitute "overkill." Yet no sooner had he voiced this note of sadness than his regional compliance director recommended to Washington precisely such action.

IX

While deans, chancellors, and personnel officials struggle with these momentous matters, faculties and gradute students with few exceptions are silent. HEW is acting in the name of social justice. Who in the prevailing campus atmosphere would openly challenge anything done in that name? Tenured faculty perhaps consult their private interests and conclude that whatever damage the storm may do to less-protected colleagues or to their job-seeking students, prudence suggests a posture of silence. Others perhaps, refusing to admit that contending interests are involved, believe that affirmative action is cost-

*Since HEW has divulged no reliable standards of its own, the well-intentioned administrator is like a worshiper of Baal, propitiating a god who may punish or reward, but who is silent.

† Self-designation is not always reliable. At Michigan, the amused or disgusted members of one of the university's maintenance crews all self-designated themselves as American Indians (bureaucratese: Native American); their supervisor was quietly asked to redesignate them accurately.

** One object of current discriminatory hiring practices at San Francisco State is to make the institution's non-academic personnel ethnically mirror the population of the Bay Area.

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free, and that all will benefit from it in the Keynesian long run. But someone *will* pay: namely very large numbers of white males who are among those distinguishable as "best qualified" and who will be shunted aside in the frantic quest for "disadvantaged qualifiables."

The inequities implied in affirmative action, and the concealed but real costs to individuals, would probably have had less damaging effects upon such highly-skilled graduate students had they been imposed in the early 1960's. Then, the sky was the limit on the growth and the affluence of higher education. If a pie gets bigger, so may its slices enlarge; nobody *seems* to lose. Such is today not the case. The pie now shrinks. One West Coast state college, for example, last year alone lost nearly 70 budgeted faculty positions due to financial stringency. Yet this same college has just announced the boldest affirmative-action program in California higher education. "Decided educational advantages can accrue to the college," it said, "by having its faculty as well as its student body be more representative of the minority population of the area. *It is therefore expected that a substantial majority of all new faculty appointments during the immediate academic years will be from minorities, including women, until the underutilization no longer exists.*" (Italics added.) Departments which refuse to play the game will have their budgets reviewed by university officials.

It is hard to say how widely such pernicious practices have been institutionalized in other colleges and universities. But were they to be generalized across the nation, one thing is certain: either large numbers of highly-qualified scholars will pay with their careers simply because they are male and white, *or*, affirmative action will have failed in its benevolent purposes.

X

It seems superfluous to end this chronicle of woe with mention of another heavy cost—one not so immediately visible—in the forceful administration of affirmative-action hiring goals. This is that men will be less able to know, much less sustain, the professional standards by which they and others judge and are judged. An enthusiastic affirmative-action administrator recently in argument with a skeptical college president said, "Let's face it—you and I know there are a lot of lousy programs and a lot of shoddiness around here. Why object to this?" By such logic, one bad turn deserves another. Since more and more less and less qualified students may enter universities, why bother too much about the quality of the new faculty hired to teach them? It is an interesting reflex habit of some federal bureaucrats and politicians (when confronted with objections that affirmative action might, for instance, discriminate against well- or better-qualified persons) to draw rhetorical analogies to confute their critics on this score. Told that affirmative action might actually discriminate against white males, J. Stanley Pottinger of HEW simply replied, "That is balderdash. That is the biggest crock I have ever heard. It is the kind of argument one expects to hear from a backwoods cracker farmer."

Indeed, backwoods cracker farmers *are* making this argument—though for reasons other than those Pottinger had in mind, and which have much to do with the things great universities require in order to survive in their greatness. Consider what a white third-year law student at a Southern university (self-designating himself disadvantaged but according to no currently approved norms) had to say with respect to his personal situation:

> The ability to think in the abstract is hard for a person with my cultural background and economic background. My parents were WASPS whose income barely exceeded the poverty level. My father is a Southern Baptist with a third-grade education. . . . My mother is a Southern Baptist also. . . . She can read and write but my father is illiterate.
>
> In the public schools I attended, memorization was always emphasized. At ——— University . . . during my first eight quarters at this law school no one has emphasized the ability to think in abstract terms. . . . I do not know if this type of education is good or bad, but I do know that all your time is spent taking notes and that there is no time for thought. . . . Regardless, the course has made me acutely aware of how fortunate I am to be an American. In no other country would I have been able to complete the requirements for a J.D. degree. My cultural and economic background would have prevented it. . . . My background also prevents me from answering a test like this in the manner you desire. But if I must answer, then I will. . . .
>
> There is another form of discrimination of which, I believe, I am a victim. As a non-member of a minority group I feel that I . . . [am] discriminated against constantly. The same admissions standards are not applied because a certain percentage of minority students must be admitted in each class regardless of their qualifications. My test score, undergraduate record, and my family (poor white) deny me admittance to Harvard because I am white. I do not say this in bitterness, but in observation of the current status of admission practices as I perceive them. . . .

Somebody, then, has to pay, when the principle of merit is compromised or replaced by preferential ethnic and sex criteria.

Who then wins? The beneficiaries of preference? The particular institution involved? Society as a whole? One may debate the answer to each of those questions, but one thing is certain: HEW wins. It wins, as Aaron Wildavsky has pointed out, because winning can be defined by internal norms. The box-score is of its own devising. To the extent that its goals are met, and the body-count proves this, it wins. But then, where have we heard *that* before?

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Public Facilities—A Memoir

Bette Howland

THE most popular volume in the branch library was the medical dictionary. Heavy, dated, it had to be retrieved from a locked glass case, had to be consulted on the premises. The borrowers, coughing behind their hands, concealed avid worries about their health. But the causes for concern were all too obvious: those racking coughs, hoarse whispers; open sores oozing serum, limbs swollen with purple pressures; eyes rimed with yellow matter, crumbs. One woman I observed over some months had something the matter with her nose. From the nose it progressed to her eye. Nose, eye were being eaten away by some inner acid. The other eye cheerful enough. A feisty type she was, short and energetic, big bony elbows and a corn-cob pipe. At last she began to wear a bandage. One wondered what this bandage could be concealing that must be yet more terrible. Leprosy? That's what I would always think of: one's vocabulary of suffering is so limited. Maybe that's why these people were boning up. But what was the use of pondering these pages? It can only have excited fresh anxieties, deeper fears. The medical dictionary was returned without comment. Miss Rose, the Reference Librarian, would take back the germy, contaminated thing and lock it up again. Lock it up and then—she couldn't help it, kindly as she was, with her loud rude voice and her knocking heels—she'd sneak back to the john and scrub her hands with green soap.

I lived in the neighborhood, a few blocks walk from the branch, and saw a lot of this. There is more than urban poverty in Uptown. The population is heavily Appalachian, American Indian, and these people bring a special rural desolation. The city blight extends to natural objects; the streaked grime of melting snow—characteristic of Chicago buildings in winter—can be seen here even on the faces. Also Puerto Rican, black, Mexican, Korean, pensioned-off Jew, coexisting without racial strife. Rebellion was a private and individual matter. Uptown runs east to the lakefront, so it is bounded by fancy buildings, motel architecture. Early in the morning, salesmen who have breakfasted in cozy coffee-shops will be seen cruising its dismal streets in their big cars, loaded with racks and sample cases. The same thing happens again in early afternoon, the leisurely hours of businessmen's lunch. These are the times when the younger and prettier girls ply their trade, during commercial hours, working a conventional shift. It's only the old warhorses who come out at night. Heavy, cold-skinned legs covered with bruises. These bruises are like the old woman's bandage—not a matter for the curious. Conjecture is inadequate, but this is standard: this is how you tell a whore in Uptown. Mountain children dance barefoot in the snow. The public pay phones are much in use here; in drugstores, lobbies, you overhear the most intense, private conversations. "Oh yeah, who's threatening who?" says a thin girl in haircurlers into the receiver, while a toddler clings to her slacks. "Suck my box, that's what you can do." On a street corner, next to an empty newsstand, a couple of men and a woman are warming their hands over a trash-can fire. Gaunt, dingily cold; the woman's shins are naked. She wears a babushka, sunglasses, and a split fur jacket. "This neighborhood is really going to the dogs," she is saying, loudly, wanting people to hear . . . the undesirable elements? Who can they be? But all this means is that everyone is conscious of degradation in Uptown. Everyone has the right to object. "I'll drink to that," says one of the men, wiping the mouth of the snug pint-flask as it passes around.

But Chicago winters are not all bad. Sometimes it gets cold, really cold, 10 or 15 below. An icy exterminating cold, sweeping down from the north like a moral force. Dung freezes in the street; germs drop dead; vermin starve. It strikes at corruption; breathing seems less injurious. The air is pure and full of truth. Walking down Argyle Street, Broadway, on my way to the library, I was in a position to appreciate this especially.

The reason I was working for the library is somewhat obscure, but I'll tell you. This was a special new program for what they called internes, or technicians—I forget the particular quasi-scientific designation. It didn't really matter; for me, the appeal was that you could work half-time. And with the Public Library, half

BETTE HOWLAND, a new contributor, is a writer living in Chicago. She is currently at work on a book, of which the present essay will form a part.

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really meant half: 18¾ hours—half the 37½-hour week. Benefits accumulated at half-rate; half the vacation time, half the sick pay, half the insurance coverage, and so on. They were nervously precise about all this; but, once again, I was in a position to appreciate. I've had a lot of part-time jobs in my life.

In fact, I was always looking for part-time work, lesser commitments. Like most struggling writers, I wanted to avoid putting my heart and soul into anything; I was saving myself—my Serious Self—my Spiritual Powers, my Best Energies. O ye of little faith! Also, of course, this is a female trait, or it was, anyway, before the great crest of Women's Liberation. So I got it both ways. All the women I knew worked at such jobs, around libraries, universities, social agencies; or else, were on the lookout for them. And the way you could tell such a job was simple: it was understood that it was not *serious*. There was always some catch. The pay was smaller too—but this limitation was the real compensation. "It's not a *real* job," that's what you always heard. One's true abilities, one's inner ardors, were not expended, were still intact. Everyone was secretly keeping herself for better things.

I was, incidentally, a divorcee (vulgar word) with two young children, and had to work. Which is only to say that I had my role cut out for me; it was a struggling, ungraceful role, so I struggled ungracefully. And all this was really baffling to me.

Had it not been for the medical dictionary, there would have been little traffic at our Reference Desk. Borglum Branch was not very busy. A sort of club of elderly gentlemen competed daily for possession of *Barron's* and the *Wall Street Journal*. If you didn't have today's, yesterday's would do. Miss Rose kept these papers in the right-hand drawer, smelling of peppermints. She herself smelled of bath oil, a surge of pine. A thin elderly spinster with uneven hems and furiously powdered cheeks. Friendly, the permissive type. (Mrs. Speer, the Head Librarian, was the other, the watch-dog type; censorious in her judgments. Hence the lurid books in locked cases.) Maybe Miss Rose kept these papers in the drawer just so she could have an excuse to open it once in a while, exchanging a warm remark. "How are you today, Mr. Adorno?" She knew them all by name. A grittily poor neighborhood, the most despairingly poor in the city; but the financial papers were in great demand, and the old men in their baggily empty coats, with their Woolworth's spectacles, trembled when they asked: eying the drawer. For the patrons—the regulars, the same ones who showed up every day—were familiar with our procedures, knew them better than we did. Indeed, any departure troubled them; they had a strong sense of the appropriate, and were particularly strict about the rule of silence. They knew their rights. There was something wrong with the fan-belts in our blower system; it made gentle, trifling noises, palpitating and fluttering. The regulars complained of the distraction, an impropriety—it detracted from the mood. Miss Rose herself had a loud self-betraying voice and heels like circus snare drums. A novel situation: the regulars used to tell *her* to be quiet. This was supposed to be a library, wasn't it? People were supposed to shut up? She went gallantly back and forth, elbows locked with books, followed by frowns, clicking tongues. "For shame! It's not ladylike," one gray-haired old lady would whisper to me, shaking her head. "It's not *refined*." The old lady wore gym shoes and her fur coat was fastened with diaper pins. " 'Her voice was ever soft and low,/ An excellent thing in woman.' Pass it on," she'd say. She herself seemed peculiarly vociferous.

But Miss Rose also had her admirers. Mr. Cohen had been asking her out to dinner for years. Tall, in his hat and heavy coat, he was another of our regulars, sat every day in the same chair at the same varnished oak table. Armchairs were provided, sunnier spots in front of large plate windows; but the regulars scorned these—too casual, maybe. Their habits were more rigorous. They were not here for browsing, that had to be understood. For them the library was an alternative to idleness. Old ladies, speedy in sneakers, in fur coats fallen on evil days—standard dress on Broadway that winter; narrow men from queues at day-labor agencies, fingering back numbers of magazines; pensioners poring over the market reports with trembling hands. The fascination with the stock market of these impoverished old men always seemed brutal to me, like the preoccupations of the diseased with the medical dictionary. But who knows what fantasies of wealth and power were fluttering in those ribcages? Sickness, failure, old age, neglect: you got the impression these were temporary reversals—the utilities disconnected, the heat cut off—one could live with such interruptions. The thin pages—of *Barron's* air-mail edition especially—rattled like tissue paper in the musty quiet.

Let us speak frankly. Where are these people to go? There are no clean well-lighted places. Bus stations are too sorrowful, with their dead television sets coming to life twenty minutes for a quarter. The all-night movies, where ushers used to nudge your shoulder if you snored too loudly, have converted to porno-houses and charge too much. One mourns their passing. I am thinking in particular of the Clark Theater, once the most illustrious of such institutions. For the Clark served Art too, these facts were inseparable; odors of winos' holey socks mingled powerfully with the dust of Desenex in college-boys' sneakers. Open twenty hours out of twenty-four; tickets were cheap; the double-bill changed daily. Another thing that

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was changed very often was the seats. The customers moved in and out of them with strange restlessness. Watching *Grand Illusion, The Thirty-Nine Steps,* you couldn't help taking this in out of the corner of your eye. Eyes sliding, oily surfaces in the emulsive light. Under folded jackets, in hidden laps, hands are reaching; slowly, with painful efforts at concealment—very distracting—uncoupling zippers. In the same way the little old ladies in the balcony timidly peel their candy bars. The Ladies Gallery is an invention of the Clark—"For Ladies Only." But it is not only for the fainthearted. Some of the women straddle their seats boldly; two seats, three seats: a shopping bag on either side. And the shopping bags get noisier as they get emptier.

Sometimes a man gets into the Ladies Gallery, possibly by mistake. But as far as the ladies are concerned, it's intentional. They give him looks that could kill. All up and down the rows, in their hearts they are jabbing him with hat-pins—no longer handy, alas. Some day the worm will turn, the righteous will be justified, the meek will inherit the earth. But for now there sits a man in the Ladies Gallery, an unholy hairy-legged intruder. When the usher arrives, he'll throw him out.

The fellow next to you jerks his head back, sets himself against his seat. A few small defenseless whimpers—then a grunt, a noise of very minor satisfaction. But the tension goes. He fumbles, rises at once—jacket folded over his arm. Off to look for another seat. His place is taken immediately, but this is a more familiar type. The Clark Street panhandler with upturned collar, sugared whiskers. He loosens his shoelaces, stretches out his legs. His chin sags to his chest; his head bobs freely; with a loud, snickering snore, it drops on your shoulder.

On Saturday nights there was the motorcycle crowd, boots, hairy chests, crosses, earrings. The gobs from Great Lakes, pea-coats three deep in the lobby. But these don't matter, they can go elsewhere. Maybe that hasn't changed anyhow. Its most loyal customers the Clark has deserted forever. On the last night before this reform a brawl broke out on the darkened floor. A drunk got noisy, crashed a bottle, startled wielding its jagged neck. The situation was intimidating. Finally a lanky black man rose calmly from his seat and pointed a gun. "You get out," he told the drunk, waving the gun at him. It was very dark of course, hard to see; but in the flickering light all the movie aficionados recognized the weapon, its steely gleam. We weren't Humphrey Bogart fans for nothing. "I's fixing to concentrate. Drop you bottle, man." It was an Orson Welles festival, *The Magnificent Ambersons.* Bustles, ostrich plumes, and Joseph Cotten. The black man sat. The drunk, disarmed, left readily. Other patrons followed in droves. Outside in the lobby he was lynched by the mob—his peers, other winos, panhandlers, senior citizens with umbrellas. These were the ones who had the real beef: where would they go tomorrow?

There remain the neighborhood branches of the public library, overheated rooms and yellow-varnished tables. The library is really the same sort of institution, assuming a responsibility to the cultured and the rejects—sometimes the same—the old-fashioned derelict, the harmless eccentric, the pensioned poor. What about the Christian Science Reading Room, you say? But that's just the point: a few newspaper racks, preachy pamphlets, this is arid stuff. It lacks the one thing indispensable: the dramatic element. Even the el stations are better than this; in Uptown they were certainly preferred. Turnstiles, traffic, mind-throttling trains darkening overhead; newspapers, magazines, exotic jungle covers—but here you get into private enterprise, and browsing is risky.

Picture then the Chicago Public Library, the downtown edifice, distantly resembling Fort Dearborn. But its massive staircases are Italian marble, glowing with an inner whiteness. The auditorium a Civil War Museum, full of artillery, heavy cannon. The same theme upstairs in the vast high-ceilinged gloom of reading-rooms; crossed swords, seals, flags draped everywhere. Guard-posts, kiosks, flank the turnstile entrances—and the doors to the public lavatories. Stationed in hollow marbled corridors. Funny business goes on in libraries, everybody knows that. It's got something to do with all those stacks, the dark heavy books. Their presence is somber and primary. You are reminded that Reason is a human passion, like any other, an instinct, a drive. It is not strange that people respond in its temples with primitive gestures, flashing switchblades, unzipping flies. No, the public library is much closer to the Clark Theater than it is to the Christian Science Reading Room. And bars, flophouses, disqualify themselves at the other extreme. For the connection is not haphazard; it must be intimate, necessary, this mingling of serious things, the High and the Low, Art and Despair. The public libraries of great cities are among the last institutions remaining for the socialization of these quiet dissenters. This is one of the unavowed, but truest functions. It is even more evident in the branch libraries, outposts flung beneath the elevated tracks of the great provincial city. Here you sense the exile. And the least deviant among these are in fact employed by the institution, and serve the rest.

MRS. SPEER was nearing retirement. With some relief. Wrapped round her head the gray braids were harried, wisps escaping. She had pale, mistreated eyes. The rimless glasses go without saying; likewise, the tailored suits—under which, less severe with herself, she wore frilly blouses, the flimsiest nylon. Very

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revealing, and the buttons were always coming undone. An odd mixture this, dishabille and desiccation. Her breath was stale and strong—almost desperately so, reaching out to you, her essence.

Borglum Branch was losing customers continuously, and—at a more alarming rate—books. There were two schools of philosophy in the public library. One was that it existed for the sake of circulating books. The other was that it existed for the sake of preserving them. With any bureaucracy in the public service, this is what it all boils down to, eventually. Mrs. Speer belonged to the public-enemy school.

Anyone who pushed through those glass doors was immediately suspect. Even patrons returning books were eyed with mistrust: we were given orders to ask for their library cards. Just in case. Pasted above the check-out machine, where you could keep your eye on it while you stamped the cards and stuffed the pockets, was a list of defaulters: card-holders who owed hundreds of dollars in overdue fines, delinquent books. Names like Rockett J. Squirrel, Hedy Lamarr, J. Edgar Hoover. The public-enemy theory is not outright error, not downright contemptible.

Mrs. Speer's efficacy as a supervisor may have been judged in terms of circulation numbers—books outgoing, active, revitalizing, indicating that the library was a live force in the community. But in her own heart she knew that the public had to be protected from itself. These were not borrowers, they were thieves! And the ones who were not thieves, mutilators. Bindings loose, pages missing, pictures defaced; mustaches, pubic hair, scribbled in with ball-point pen. Also telephone numbers, shopping reminders. Read in steamy bathtubs, under dripping submarine sandwiches. And people had wept over these books, rent their nails, torn their hair. Of other traces of temporary human habitation, artifacts, I won't speak. The books had to be preserved. At some branches, the big Webster's dictionary was bolted and chained; things had gone that far.

And all this was in Mrs. Speer's breath.

A man was hurrying in, a great armload of books up to his chin. Through the glass doors you could see his car double-parked in the street. "Ask to see his library card," Mrs. Speer whispered sharply. For she knew I didn't like to do this and kept an eye out when I worked behind the desk. And now she had spotted him coming and moved in, her breath as close to me as her elbow. More prodding. Together we watched the man struggling through two sets of doors, puffing as hard as the engine—wheezing outside into wintry air. He hoisted all his books onto the desk and started away, unburdened.

"May I see your card?"

Taken aback, he reached distractedly for his pocket. "How come? What for? Nothing's wrong?" Angry with me, fumbling through his billfold.

"Because this lady standing right next to me is my boss, and she just told me to ask you."

Wise guy. It wasn't kind. I was lazy and proud, a difficult combination. And Mrs. Speer was definitely not a bad sort; it was just that years of working as a public servant had made her peculiar. There is a certain socialized insanity in these categories. Schoolteachers used to have it. Once I read a note posted on the bulletin board in the high-school principal's office; it was from a teacher who had retired, gone to live on a chicken farm. I had been in her English class. We read *Ivanhoe*. That is, she read it aloud to us, sitting behind the desk in her smock, her cheek in her hand. Her crimped white head. On her desk, under her desk, piled on top of windowsills, along radiators, from head to foot in her closet, were stacks of colored notebooks, theme papers. They were all on *Ivanhoe*. These theme papers were a requirement; the colored notebooks too—no grade issued without one. But everyone knew how grades were distributed in Miss Bozzich's class: "Neat" girls got *E*'s; girls who wore blue-jeans, *G*. Short boys, *F*; boys with long legs, protruding from the childish seats, failed invariably. There was no appeal. All classes were the same. Each day before her reading began, someone had to get up and tell "the story thus far." As we progressed into the story, these daily resumés naturally got longer. Besides, we had caught on; some of us were deliberately long-winded. By the time Miss Bozzich started to read, the bell would ring. We had reached a point of impasse. I remember the close print, the thick rough paper, the name of dark Rebecca. . . . But we stopped on page 98. Next semester it would begin all over again. "My little chickens are so nice and polite—so well-behaved; much more grateful than my students ever were," she had written in her note.

ANYWAY, after the double-parked man, my services were not often required at the desk. But Mrs. Speer already had her chickens. These were the new books, stacked on the long table in the back room in tall neat rows. On top of each pile, a note: "Do Not Disturb, J. Speer." Mrs. Speer was cataloguing these books, and whenever she could she'd go into the back and shut the door. This was her retreat. The books already on the shelves may have been used, grubby, touched by too many hands; but these books confronted her in all their original splendor. The room was fragrant with their newness. Mrs. Speer loved these books, loved them apparently as physical objects. This was something else you discovered in libraries; there were those who read books, and then there were those whose attachment to them was of another order altogether. I can't say what the nature of this attachment was. But one thing for sure: all the shipments of new books that came into Borglum

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went straight into the back room. And they tended to stay there. A virgin forest. No one else was allowed to touch them; and if, through necessity, you had to budge a stack or two—for they mounted up on the typing table, the files, the chairs, you couldn't get through—then there were those notes, warning you that here was a Secret Order, not to be imperiled.

The thing was, the cataloguing had already been done at the Downtown Library. The books came carded, pocketed, and numbered, and all that remained for the branches to do were a few perfunctory clerical tasks. At one time, the cataloguing had been indeed the special office of the Head Librarians; but now they had been freed from such musty associations, ordered out of their dry cubbyholes, to put themselves—in other words—into circulation. This was the idea; not Mrs. Speer's idea at all. She had put up with this new dispensation for a time, until her husband died. This had happened not long ago, and shortly thereafter she had made the simple readjustment necessary to her sanity. She had simply resumed cataloguing.

The cards that came with the books were disregarded, she started the whole job afresh, from scratch. Did she get the same results? Who knows? For the trouble with this, as with most individual solutions, was that things were against her. There really was too much to do. And the steeper the piles sprouting under the thick oak legs, the more she pondered. The intricacies of cataloguing seemed to multiply—refracted, like prisms, rainbows. She talked about her "problems," the "tough nuts" she had to crack. Was a volume on Colonial Furniture—History? Handicraft? Art? Was Horticulture a Science or a Hobby? You see? She had lost her nerve for making such fundamental decisions.

Some of this Miss Rose had told me; some of it Mrs. Speer told me herself, for when I first came she intended to have me help her with the cataloguing, she confessed that she needed help badly—her breath desperate as usual. But this task had been promised also to my predecessor, an M.A. fresh out of library school; she never got to do it. So the young woman had made a point of telling me. And cataloguing was her specialty! Her field of academic concentration! Perhaps Mrs. Speer did not trust such avidity. I presented the opposite case. Mrs. Speer saw that I had no lively interest, was not keen for the complexities. Also, she didn't care for my typing, which was as rapid as a machine-gunner and riddled with errors. Flack flack flack. She was afraid of it! Listening to those brutal noises, her pale glance would fuse behind her rimless glasses. So Mrs. Speer could not trust me either, a totally accurate instinct. The time had not come for her to surrender. She could not relinquish her task; nor, what it amounted to, the books. She may have been protecting them in this way, delaying the inevitable process of attrition, despoliation—borrowing, mutilation, theft.

She put off giving me my instruction; the subject dropped, disappeared altogether. But this was what usually happened. The library technician (interne) was a semi-professional, semi-clerical position; you were supposed to do everything, make yourself useful, fill in the gaps. But employees were Civil Service, fingerprinted in City Hall; people already had their places, their allotted tasks, and did not wish to share them. It threatened their own role in the institution. What with one thing and another, it was proving difficult to find a spot for me at Borglum.

Beebee, sitting on her high stool at the circulation desk, hunched over in characteristic bad posture, was not less protective of her overdue notices than Mrs. Speer was of her books. Strange, but in the library employees themselves were forbidden to read, it was against the rules. Which was why Beebee was always hunched over like that, a passionate book-worm, passionately concealing the pages of some contraband book in her lap. Glancing down at it possessively as her fingers riffled the files. She wouldn't let anyone look over her shoulder. But when she did this—when she glanced down—you could see the slovenly, dandruffy part in her strong black hair. Beebee was like dark Rebecca; that is, she had certain vital characteristics: that black hair, the white sharply-modeled nose, heavy Sephardic eyes. But Beebee was terribly untidy. Coarse wires straggled from her bun. Her gums—the kind that played a prominent role in her smile—were rimmed with dried blood, her teeth furred with green moss. Beebee lived at home and had a boyfriend named Henry who was not Jewish. This was the dilemma, the present interest, the focus, the drama of her life. Henry would meet her at the library—meetings proscribed and rare—very tall, thin in the face, with long big teeth and foggy glasses. His hair was inconsequential. After they said hello, that was it; they never seemed to need another word. Henry in gym shoes would sprawl across the counter on baseball-jacket sleeves, gazing after Beebee, hunched busily on the high stool, her striking and disorderly head ducking over the files. From time to time she'd lower her white elbows to her lap, sink her chin into her hands, and gaze back. This collapsed Henry. Their slumped shoulders heaved a loud, prolonged sigh.

This was our current event too; what we talked about over coffee break in the *back* back room. Sitting round the chrome-legged dinette. Should Beebee leave home and marry Henry? Defy her parents? Deny her faith? What if Henry converted?—he looked convertible. Etc. Listening to our advice, sipping sweet tea through green teeth, Beebee grew evasive and dreamy. Her dark, high-crested glance had a certain remoteness. She

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liked to have us talking about her life, didn't want to end the discussion too abruptly; still, she was a private and secretive soul. Most of us kept our lunch in the refrigerator, but Beebee kept hers in her locker; and she went in and out of this locker as jealously, possessively, as she dipped into her files—fines, overdue notices, privileged information. She'd slam the tin door if you caught her. Probably she had nothing more terrible hidden in there than some books; but books, come to think of it, were the worst thing you could hide. In a library. The pall of suspicion hung over us all. We were surrounded by temptation, breathing books.

The clandestine had a natural appeal for Beebee. It was actually Miss Rose who took the more pressing interest in her plight, for Miss Rose had a story of her own. In college she had been engaged to an interne; drafted as a medic, he had been killed in the war. And after Stanley was killed . . . "Well after Stanley was killed, I knew I'd never find another man as good. 'What's the matter with you?' my mother would say. 'You're too particular.' Well I couldn't help being particular. After Stanley."

Her elbows, planted on the formica top, were steeped in bracelets—these bangles had a way of sliding up her thin arms. Her light blue eyes were flush with the level of the teacup, brimming over behind horn-rims. I may as well get it over with, the whole description; the peering near-sighted expression, the bold nose, the (sometimes) hennaed hair. Beads, powder, taffeta skirts, fumes of pine—all this loosely assembled; when Miss Rose tucked in her blouse, her slip would pop out; when she hiked up her slip, something else would give. She bought her clothes in the gloomiest shops on State Street, under the darkest influences of the el-tracks; bounty signs posted all over the place announcing that shoplifters will be prosecuted; mirrors—like hub-caps—spying down from every corner. If you catch sight of your face in such a mirror, distorted, spoon-shaped, you look like a criminal. But how could Miss Rose ever look like a criminal? Who could make such a mistake? When she discarded her glasses, her face was defenseless altogether. Once it greeted me thus from behind her desk, weakly beaming: cocked to one side; fresh powder, thick as flour, but carnation pink, an inflammatory hue; and she was mischievously sucking on a peppermint. What was this all about? I had mentioned that a friend—male—would be picking me up at work, and Miss Rose had made herself presentable. It touched me. Garish? Loud? Yes, I suppose so; offense is the best defense; the vulgarity was there. It hurt. It has to be mentioned. But after all it was just there. It was an accident.

This was not the first time I had heard such a story. Sister Grace, my ex-husband's aunt, had converted to the Episcopal Church so she could become a nun; her lover had been killed in the First World War, and she wished to dedicate herself. There was a parallel; the same motivation, a removal from the mainstream. Sister Grace's convent occupied a lovely big house on Brattle Street in Cambridge; the nuns were always polishing the lustrously dark stairs. They had cats, and a black cook named Cleopatra. Was she a good cook? That I can't tell you. Seated at lunch, at the long table laid with linen, crystal, silver napkin rings, the long leaded windows trailing shadows of ivy, I found I couldn't taste the food: it was all too institutional. In their idleness, the nuns doted on the cats, imitated them; now they made cats' tongues, licking cream. Bland faces, white surplices, gray habits; and many aged women boarded with them, their mothers. It seemed that the mothers of these nuns lived to a ripe old age. The widows' securities helped to support the convent; all this New England gentility was on its last legs. But Sister Grace was one of their real mainstays, a nurse specializing in terminal cases. In her spare time looking after other elderly nuns and their even more elderly mothers. They had problems; they fainted in Filene's basement, they fell off subway platforms in Mass. Square. Sister Grace would tell you; a fine old woman, drawing herself rigid and upright, fixing her gaze on a far corner as if she were reading off a chart. Broken heads, hips, colostomy bags. She dealt in misfortunes. Miss Rose, being Jewish, had chosen the bookish way. After Stanley? But there was no after.

I would urge Miss Rose to take Mr. Cohen up on his offer. "Why not go out with him? He looks presentable. He seems like a gentleman."

"Oh yes," Miss Rose would say, hastily affirmative. After all, he was her suitor! "Mr. Cohen is certainly a gentleman. A gentleman of the old school. A very fine man."

"So? How come? What's a dinner? No lifetime commitment."

It seemed that she liked to be teased in this way. On such cold nights, waiting at her bus stop—she was afraid to stand alone on the dark, chill, sharp corner—she would allow it, anyway. Safe to talk when her bus was coming. Looking out after the vague lights that would come dipping up to the curb. People were always urging Miss Rose. If she took a certain exam and passed it, she could become a Head Librarian herself. No routine promotion, this was a leap, and her salary would increase considerably. Everyone thought she should do it. But Miss Rose was afraid to take this exam, she shuddered at the thought of it, the very mention sent her fluttering. And it must have been mentioned with some regularity, since this had been going on by now for years. Like Mr. Cohen.

She shrugged. "After Stanley. . . ."

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"Oh Miss Rose! You know that's a lot of baloney!"

Her eyes lit up. She cocked her head to one side in its fluffy angora cap, peeling off her glove to get at her bus fare. She always carried the change in her knitted mitt. "Yes," she said cheerfully, "I guess it is. Yes, I know it." And climbed aboard in her galoshes.

How could the tall, politely bespectacled Mr. Cohen, keeping an eye on IBM, Bunker-Ramo, and Xerox, but having all his money in a mattress somewhere, or possibly even in the lining of his coat—it looked bulky enough—how could he compete with a dead man, a war hero? And a doctor on top of it? How disappointed he looked whenever he saw me sitting at her desk! Presenting himself faithfully, laying his hat across his chest:

"No Miss Rose tonight?"

It was not that Miss Rose needed or desired assistance any more than anyone else; but she was softer than anyone else, more vulnerable, she had to give in. That was how I had finally ended up spending most of my 18¾ hours at the Reference Desk—the one place in all that moribund, underused facility where there really was the least to do. This was the backwater of backwaters, and one became preoccupied with its significant facts. The fan-belts; the *Moody's Guides, Commodities and Futures.* The Children's Library was in another wing, a totally autonomous sector, a brighter, more spacious room with its low tables. And Mrs. Endlin pasted colorful book-jackets and snow scenes on her bulletin board, kept a jar of candy canes on her desk. She had right instincts. Plump, red-haired, her vital juices still flowing. Her breath was sweet. It was as if dealing with children had kept her healthy—saner. But her cactus plants were doing badly, they looked gray.

We had our flurries of activity. On Friday afternoons, invariably, there would be some barroom bet to settle. It was payday, and workmen having a few beers in a nearby tavern would fall into aimless arguments. World records, batting averages, the age of the Pope, the name of President McKinley's assassin. This meant a delegation: three, four solid laboring men, shouldering their way in a body, asking here and there and directed at last—mistrustful, unconvinced—to the Reference Desk. These presentations used to remind me of scenes in old movies, when such heavy naturalism was still in vogue, in which the striking workers confronted the boss, swivelling behind his big desk. There was suspicion here, too, there was a kind of hostility. They were still hot under the collars of their lumber-jackets.

"We want to see a copy of 'If.' 'If' by Rudyard Kipling. It's a poem. 'If you can keep your wits when all about you. . . .' "

"It's 'head,' stupid."

"It's 'wits,' nit-wit. Wits."

"It's 'head,' " I said.

Wrong move.

"Oh yeah?"

They all glared at me. They were not going to be patronized. Even the man who had his money on "head" was against me, seemed about ready to change his mind.

"Can you show us in a book?"

Did I think they were going to take my word for it, just because I was sitting behind a desk? It was just that for me it was always easier to rattle these things off; the truth being that I didn't know where to find anything. But that would never do. They weren't going to take anybody's word—except Kipling's. Proof they were after, the evidence had to be produced. Sometimes they would make a copy on the duplicating machine; money changed hands.

Also bound to put in his appearance at least once a week: a big Sterno-breathed man, bareheaded, towing a little boy. The kid very small, hanging on by his mittens; and his nose was running. But they had the same way of standing, straddle-legged, buttoned up in their pea-coats; the same crew-cuts, revealing the same long bumpy skulls. The kid's bumpier, more tender; you could see the furrows and worries of his scalp through pale fuzz. His face as pale, unoriginal.

This man always had a quotation for me to look up.

"Let's have a copy of 'The Face on the Barroom Floor.' Just the last line—" he would add impatiently—"I know the rest."

He had me there.

He pointed to the shelves: "It should be in this one over here: *Beloved Hymns and Popular Verse.*"

The next time, what? "Let's see—I think it's that line from Thoreau. About marching to the footsteps of a different drummer. It's in *Walden,* but it might be easier for you to find it in *Bartlett's.*"

Becoming familiar, you see, with my limitations.

I never figured out what this was all about. Did he want to test me and trip me, or just to make sure he kept me on my toes? I, me, being here not an individual but an entire institution. Maybe he visited other branches too? It's possible. A one-man citizens' committee, self-appointed in his rounds. Confronting me, big and rough and fortified with alcohol against the cold like a vigilante. The little boy, expressionless, licking his clear, shining lip. They qualified as regulars.

It was strange that the one outstanding fact of life in our library—the fact that so many of our patrons were regulars, more faithful than any of us (some certainly put in as many hours)—was never mentioned. It was unmentionable. More ordinary patrons took out books, swelled our

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credit, kept us in business. Regulars of course never took out any books; what for? they didn't need to. "She's very good with the old people," I heard Mrs. Speer saying once into the phone—a conversation about Miss Rose's promotion. She meant: the regulars; but she did not know that that was what she meant. Our real business, our real function, this went unacknowledged. And what about those Board of Directors meetings downtown, in the immense flag-draped room with its black cannons that had boomed over Gettysburg? Plans were being drawn up, funds sought, for the expansion of the Main Library building. It was a limestone white elephant, but it couldn't be torn down; it could only be surrounded. Architects submitted fanciful sketches: malls, trees, glass walls surmounting the old gray bulging stones. Did anyone ever get up at such meetings and say: "Do you think the bums from Clark Street will go for this? After all, they're the ones who spend the most time here. And what about the old ladies with the shopping bags? If we make the place look like Saks Fifth Avenue, will they feel at home?"

Popkin, a thin old man, scrawny-necked, in a long coat which reached to his ankles—a peculiar shade of naval blue—went in and out of the stacks in a rapid shuffle. A timid soul, singleminded, turning neither left nor right, with his matted white head, shuffling headlong, tiptoeing forward with a book, some precious volume, always tucked under his elbow, nestling in his armpit. He was hatching it. Miss Rose told me he was a poet. But what if you said, "But Miss Rose—have you ever noticed that Popkin comes every day? the whole day? day and night? that tiptoe shuffle?" What would happen if you said this? And what about Judge Brady. A big, open-faced man with an impressively white mane of hair; not a real judge, of course, but he had the more primary qualifications. Stern and impassive, a pillar of dignity, easing himself down in his chair at the varnished oak table—a sturdy oak himself—about to preside. Over what? Why always that chair? Or tidy little Mr. Adorno, eyes hugely magnified, with a bright polished smile, teeth regular, alight in his apple face. He was eighty, as he was always saying, always asking me to read aloud for him notes he had scribbled to himself. Listening, all teeth and eyes: nodding, Yes, yes, that's right. What was? My transcription? His thoughts? Or something else entirely.

And then the tall, straight, gray old woman who dropped in every day to use the bathroom. Gray?—from head to foot: gray hair, gray face, gray coat, gray dress; and finally, a pair of laced-up combat boots. She stayed in long; you could hear the toilet flushing—but continuously, endlessly; it went on without let-up. It was, almost, a natural phenomenon. Yellowstone. Niagara Falls. The water, rushing hoarsely, was being sucked straight into the earth. What could she be up to? But no one else could get in there. One simply had to wait until she decided to emerge, dripping wet—long and thin and gray as a wet-mop—and sloshing out of the door in her thick-soled boots. What about pneumonia? an old woman going about drenched in the cold. But it may have been a health regimen—her own—some people take cold showers. Was she perhaps doing her laundry in the john? Or dunking her feet, some kind of physical therapy? Whatever—she seemed to survive. This activity titillated; roused a few eyebrows, a few glances of wild surmises; but that was all. Our business was books—checking them in, stamping them out, cataloguing, shelving. Minding our own business. At Borglum the level of tolerance for individual variations was very high. It had to be, the facts were too peculiar. And this—a wondering glance at the bathroom door, emitting its awesome, unmistakable noises—this was the closest we ever got to acknowledging any of that other business. For this was the one thing that could not be tolerated: to have characterized the services of the public library in this way.

Miss Rose, second-in-command, took charge when Mrs. Speer was not there, which meant she had to close up most late nights. Such responsibility worried her wretchedly. She was no authoritarian, not a bossy bone in her body. She'd go knocking about in noisy agitation, heels clattering, dragging kitetails of lace petticoat. Perhaps she hoped to rout everyone with this noise? Or was she concealing the pounding of her heart? There were always some patrons who objected. Surly, looking at the clock: "What do you mean, it's closing time? It's five to nine." When the page-boy—Alfonse, a tall, stooping, black high-school boy of a downcast and moody disposition; or so he seemed, shoving the heavy cart, always behind a barricade of books—when Alfonse came loping and trundling through the reading room, dumping books on his cart in his dangerously off-hand way and warningly dimming the lights, it was taken as a personal insult. Why not? It was a personal insult. The regulars had as much right to the premises as we did—squatters' rights.

The heavy-shouldered, unshaven man, slouching on his elbows, pressing the heels of his hands into his eyes. This one always came with a companion, another gaunt familiar type of the neighborhood, a mass of dry hair, haggard fur. But all this haggardness, hair, still attracted the eye; its color was gone, not its wild vitality. She had been a great beauty, squandered powerful gifts, that was the impression she created; her chair thrust back, her fur coat flung open, legs crossed, raw-boned, raw-boned and bare. When the time came, she'd shake her friend's shoulder. But others, alone, could not be persuaded so gently; shaken by the shoulder, they might not take it so

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kindly. If they were asleep, you never knew—as in the legends of the Islanders, their souls off, wandering, might not have time to return.

But Miss Rose could rise to the occasion:

"If you don't go quietly," she'd say, her voice forced and violently tremorous, "then—well then—we'll just have to get the page-boy to throw you out!"

Alfonse's dark eyes lustrously widened. He was extraordinarily tall, but thin as a rail, with long reticent hands and feet—and no inclination for being drawn out in this way. Stooping behind his barricaded cart. This was a bouncer? At such times we were conscious of our lack of manpower.

This was another fact of life in a branch library. There was an unspoken rule: none of the staff could leave at night until all of us were ready. We would assemble at the desk in our wraps (I was reminded of the terminology of kindergartens, cloakrooms, fire-drills), waiting to depart together. This was protocol. And it was like a drill; Miss Rose, timid, would test all the doors again and again; the lockers, the cash-drawer, even the bathroom: was anyone hiding? One has fantasies about being forgotten in such places at night—public facilities, museums, even department stores. Once at the zoo I walked into the lion house after closing time; the door had been improperly locked, sprang open. The long gallery was deserted, and from dark cages, behind thick bars, the big cats were already talking to each other. Their powerful growls rolling down the cavernous hall like thunder. They knew. And one sensed something like this about the library at night, when we waited to leave the darkened building; gloomy and depopulated with all its brooding stacks of books. If you were left alone with them, would they talk back to you?

When Miss Rose had locked the front doors, she would lock them again. Fingers stiff in knitted gloves fumbling with the keys. At last she would fling them down the brass mouth of the Book Depository—a final precaution. She never transported these keys with her. What if she took that famous exam and passed it?—that's what she was afraid of. Then what would she do? It was enough to have to worry about locking up on these nights! The fluffy angora head peering down the dark slot, just to make sure. . . . Done with formalities. Now it was time to hurry, waving goodbye, going our separate ways at the corner; and as we dispersed, remembering the grimness of the neighborhood. A general observation, but there were particulars. Beebee had been followed to her el station a couple of nights by one of our patrons. Her departing figure, in flats and babushka, kept turning, looking backward.

We all knew who this was, a young man in a leather jacket. He was slight, fair, with ridges of kinky blond hair; pale eyes, bony orbs; a preponderant forehead. And he had a nervous tic of the jaw; you could see the muscles leaping under his skin. It seemed that he took out books on remedial reading—a laudable enterprise—and sometimes he sat and studied them. But one foot never stopped tapping under the table; one blue-jeaned knee jerked constantly up and down.

As soon as Beebee saw him, she climbed off her high stool and concealed herself behind the tall hedge of the circulation desk. He kept shifting in his seat, glancing over there. He'd reach deep inside his leather jacket, draw out a straight shiny object, a fountain pen perhaps? Crouching over as if to write. Then the kinky blond head looked all around, the eyes darted in their corners, the muscles jumped in his cheek. He'd slip the object back. Someone might be eavesdropping on his thoughts, that's what it looked like; reading his mind in every random twitch.

But who could be eavesdropping on him? Not at this table. Judge Brady, unbending even over his books, sat erect, reading at a distance through his magnifying glass. Another man dozed on folded arms. As for the gray-haired old lady with the diaper pins in her coat, it was Miss Rose she had her eye on—fiercely waiting to pounce on her. What could that loud person be up to now? Approaching the table, very pink in the face, heels battering, rapid, noisier than ever?

No sooner had Miss Rose leaned over to speak to the young man than he bounded up—so suddenly, violently, that his chair crashed over backward. His clenched fists struck the table.

"You goddamned lousy Jews. You're always telling people what to do!"

"If you're going to talk that way," said Miss Rose, thickly, her heart at once in her throat—"If you won't keep your voice down—"

"Fucking niggers and Jews! That's all you've got in here anyhow. And you think you're running the whole goddamned show."

"Such language," the old lady whispered. "But you hear everything these days."

There was a murmur throughout the room. The financial pages stopped rustling. For a moment, all you could hear were the fan-belts, flimsy, fainthearted. A violation of the library's inalienable silence. But the young man had all the attention now. And he knew it; zipping his jacket up smartly with a jerk of the chin, methodically picking up his books. His swivelling eyes were taking it all in. "I'll be back," he said—announced, looking all around, addressing the whole room now, his audience. "And I'm going to fix you lousy Jews if it's the last thing I do."

"Oh yeah? Why don't you start right now then?"

It was Mr. Cohen, rising, drawing himself up to his full height and slamming his hat on his head.

"Oh yeah?" This was Mr. Adorno. He shoved his chair back with a deliberate, threatening thud. All over the room chairs were scraping,

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tottering. The old pensioners, rising; sleepers, waking. The young man tossed down his books and put up his fists. He began to back off, cautious, elbows gripping his chest.

They were closing in; gaunt men, baring their arms. Mr. Adorno, with his big soft eyes and bright teeth, kept grinning, thumbing his nose. Popkin's timid, frothy white head peeped in and out as he tiptoed round and round with his rapid shuffle. They all seemed merely to be skipping round, for that matter; like boxers from the past, bantamweights, keeping their guard up, shifty moving targets. Politely almost; an old-fashioned match, with their old-fashioned rules. You could see their enemy's eyes darting behind his knuckle-ridges. Not quite believing this. Only Judge Brady stood firm, feet planted, one arm doubled up in front of the other and arching his back in a stand-offish way. A most honorable, upright John L. Sullivan, Gentleman Jim. The Marquis of Queensberry himself!

Miss Rose tugged at Cohen's coat-sleeve, but he shook her off.

"He started it."

They were waiting for him to swing first; he did—an arm shot out, jerked back. The old women gasped. This was for real! Then Cohen took his swing—very wide, spinning himself halfway about under the weight of his own long arm in its heavy sleeve--and the young man ducked easily and crouched again. Taunting now, jerking his twitching jaw, flexing his shoulders in the leather jacket.

THE situation was serious. Even worse, it was sensitive. We weren't so much worried that the fellow would land a punch and hurt anyone—though his knuckles were sharp, might damage an old face. But what if one of these old guys should have a heart attack and drop right on the spot? All this fancy footwork, crowding toward the enemy; such excitement was dangerous. But no one dared to say this. Mortal injury? yes, but there was something more touchy, more serious, with these old men especially. It seemed to me that this was the influence of the Six-Day War last spring. Cohen, the other old Jews in their overcoats, saw themselves suddenly as warriors, men of that strong arrogant race they were breeding these days in the desert. And maybe the rest of the old men, not Jews, felt something of this. Why shouldn't they? They were equally aroused; weak, counted out, they had had enough too. The worms were turning, the meek were inheriting the earth. . . . And you couldn't interfere with them. You couldn't, at such a moment, bring to their attention the fact that they really were old and feeble. Judge Brady's firm face was congested and purple. And Mr. Adorno! Such bright ferocity—at eighty! The gaunt man in his shirtsleeves (his once heavy frame!) was coughing; lungs wheezing. All that the timid librarians were worried about was protecting them from themselves.

"Do something, Alfonse! Do you think I ought to call the police?" This was the last thing Miss Rose would ever do.

"What are you waiting for? Break it up."

"You may need the inhalator squad instead."

But somehow they had managed to surround him; a skinny arm grabbed his collar, a heavy coat-sleeve hooked his belt. They pinned his arms. "Let's show him the door, boys," Judge Brady shouted, and they hustled him out—jerking, kicking, the kinky blond head, bony orbs, swivelling.

"Kikes! Crazies! Niggers! Bums! That's all you've got!"

They ran him into the street. He disappeared. Very soon the police arrived, partners, a low-slung heavy-set pair in fur-collared jackets. They were wiping their caps dry. For it had started to snow, and clots of the stuff slid from collars and brawny leather shoulders, dripped and melted all around them.

They put their caps on again. "What's the trouble?"

It was past nine, but none of the regulars had left, and no one had asked them to. Now everyone started talking at once; everyone had a complaint, an injury. The old lady clicked her tongue as she knotted her plastic rain-bonnet under her chin. Such language! In a library! Where you had a right to expect some consideration! Miss Rose, under compulsion, forced herself to repeat the young man's words. The old men told of a knife. And Beebee—who had not yet poked her black head out from behind the counter—reported being followed.

But the cops, listening to all this, were more and more and more unmoved. Their eyes grazed slowly on one old face and on another—the aged kooks in their shabby coats, abominable smelly furs, weakly indignant. Big deal! This arousing incident bored them completely. They looked toward each other. You could see what they were thinking: Kikey Cohen? Nigger Alfonse? What's to get excited? Facts, just facts. They and the young man were in significant agreement. For the second time that night, the unmentionable came close to being, humiliatingly, mentioned.

They held up their hands. "Okay, cool it everybody."

"And here's Judge Brady. And he'll tell you. He saw the knife."

Judge Brady had gone outside to watch. To watch what? Now he came in to report.

"Is he really a judge?" asked one of the policemen, forgetting about the knife and for the first time lifting his eyes, showing a flicker of interest. He turned round respectfully.

"It's snowing so hard you can't tell much!" The big white-haired old man was full of breath-

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puffing, snow-stamping enthusiasm. He blew his nose and hastened out again.

The cop turned back. "Will you push the buzzer and let me in?" He wanted to use the bathroom.

"Give us another call if this fellow shows up again."

As a matter of fact, the young man continued to hang around Borglum, in his familiar leather jacket. He was eventually arrested, locked up; he had a history. But this didn't matter now.

THE cops left then and we locked up. It was snowing forcefully. Not one of your fresh, swirling paperweight versions; not the pelt of dreamy white Xmases; but a wet cutting sleet. The north wind was blowing it all horizontally. It grappled with clutched coat-collars; the streets were already covered with the stuff. All those gym shoes in that peroxide slush! Judge Brady and Mr. Adorno appointed themselves to escort Beebee to her el train. Others trudged off; the street lights were melting. Mr. Cohen, trying to touch his hat in the slashing sleet, asked Miss Rose if he could see her home. She demurred—she would always demur. But, after all, tonight was different; it was time for a little charity. She consented to be walked to her bus stop. He grasped her elbow, she pinched his thick sleeve; and they bowed their heads to the snow.

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On Intoxication

John P. Sisk

PERHAPS the best way to approach the subject of intoxication is to note that the word "whiskey" in its Gaelic derivation *(uisgebeatha)* meant exactly what whiskey ads have always implied: "water of life." It is not hard to find support in literature for the widespread conviction that this is the proper etymology for alcoholic beverages of all kinds. In fact, if one were to compile a toper's anthology of great alcoholic moments in literature, it would be no great problem to find prestigious entries. Such a collection might begin rather modestly with St. Paul's prescription of a little wine for Timothy's stomach and end grandly with the Holy Bottle's oracular "Drink" at the end of Rabelais's *Pantagruel* and Bacbuc's explication thereof: "by wine we become divine . . . for 'tis in its power to fill the soul with all truth, learning, and philosophy." Somewhere in between room would have to be found for Falstaff's great speech in *Henry IV, Part II,* in which addiction to sack is called "the first humane principle." Since the anthology would have to be put together with one eye cocked on the abstemious opposition, I suggest as a disarming epigraph Iago's response in *Othello* to Cassio's identification of wine with the devil: "Come, come; good wine is a good familiar creature if it is well used; exclaim no more against it."

Such a publishing enterprise would of course have to be highly selective and not too respectful of context. The water of life flows abundantly in literature but the writer-class as a whole seems to be aware that the humane conviviality of Hogarth's Beer Street is more than offset by the degeneracy of his Gin Lane. Gin-saturated Krook's death by spontaneous combustion in Dickens's *Bleak House* is at least as likely to stick in the memory as Falstaff's apostrophe to sack. Indeed, writers tend if anything to be hard on heavy drinkers, possibly out of a need to punish themselves for overindulgence.

The plain fact is that in literature as in life people are most of the time driven to drink: they drink not so much out of a lust for life, as might appear to be the case with Falstaff and Pantagruel, but in order to make life more endurable. As Nietzsche says, we are "delicate children of life" and badly need the illusions of science, art, philosophy, and religion. But when the illusions fail—that is, when they appear to us as mere illusions—there is always intoxication to assuage the pain. Thus John K. Galbraith remembers Albert Speer's 1945 observation about the high Nazis who had to live with the prospect of the imminent collapse of the Third Reich. "In the last six months," said Speer, "one had always to deal with drunken men." Even Falstaff, Shakespeare scholar Tucker Brooke once argued, is given too much credit for *joie de vivre*: he is really driven to sack-drinking and hell-raising because, like Iago, he is a bored materialist.

People who are driven to drink may experience fabulous states of mind, but it is hard for them in sober retrospect to take these states seriously, since the fictions of intoxication so routinely fail to stand up to the critical eye of a hangover. Besides, there is some reason to believe that people who are driven to drink are less likely than others to enjoy the false consciousness of intoxication: being negative drunkards, they approach alcohol in the wrong frame of mind, perhaps suffering in advance the inevitable agonies of hangover, and so defeat themselves. The inhabitants of Gin Lane appear to have been driven to drink and Hogarth properly represents them as existing in hell. Dickens makes it hard for the reader to believe that Krook had discovered in gin a paradise he could not bear to leave.

No doubt the best way to enjoy the paradise of the alcoholic false consciousness is to arrive in it innocently unaware that its underside is hangover. This truth is memorably dramatized in the story of Aloadine's Paradise as medieval and renaissance Europeans learned it from such reporters as William of Tyre, Marco Polo, and Samuel Purchas. Aloadine (Purchas's version of the name; Polo's is Alaodin) is better known as the Old Man of the Mountain, the common designation for leaders of the Assassins, or hashish-eaters, a sect founded in Persia by Hassan Sabbah late in the 11th century. As Purchas tells the story, Aloadine enlists his intrepid young followers by causing "a certaine drink to bee given to ten or twelve of them, which cast them in a deep sleep" so that they can be carried into the palace and woken. There they are so sensually enter-

JOHN P. SISK, whose essays and reviews appear regularly in these pages, is professor of English at Gonzaga University in Spokane.

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tained by "goodly Damosels" that "the Fooles thought themselves in Paradise indeed." After four or five days of these pleasures they are again given the "certaine drink," carried out of the palace, and revived. Persuaded by Aloadine that they had truly been given a foretaste of Paradise and promised a permanent sojourn there if they give themselves completely to his will, they gladly become part of his ruthless army, the ferocity of which is in effect the expression of an intoxication that will endure until, presumably, the rude awakening of death.

So far as English literature is concerned, it is hard to find a better comic treatment of the alcoholic false consciousness than in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Here Caliban, the reluctant and half-savage servant to Prospero, is discovered by the castaways Trinculo and Stephano, the latter of whom has floated ashore on a butt of sack. He gives some of the wine to Caliban, who, convinced that "the liquor is not earthly," worships its bearer as if he were a god and proposes an insurrection to liberate the island from the tyranny of Prospero. The island itself with its ambience of music, magic, and strangely exhilarating air is established as a psychedelic place. In this heady environment Caliban, with his tipsy sense of elevation about his previous condition of half-articulate servitude, is a comic repetition of Prospero, whose genuinely expanded consciousness and ability to control his environment are the consequences of disciplined study.

It is to be noted that Caliban's vision of instant liberation (he envisions an erotic utopia in which he will possess Prospero's daughter Miranda and "people the island with Calibans") is more the expression of a metaphoric than a literal intoxication. He is closer to Aloadine's Assassins than to Dickens's Krook. Having gotten high for the first time in his life, he stays high all afternoon. Sack ought to have quickly stupefied him or driven him berserk, as it did those rum-frenzied Indians Benjamin Franklin in his *Autobiography* refers to as forming "a scene the most resembling our ideas of hell that could well be imagined." At the very least Caliban ought to have behaved like Cassio in *Othello*, who is off and roaring after little more than one "craftily qualified" cup of wine.

But this is frequently enough the way it is in literature: literal intoxication becomes metaphoric intoxication because the writer needs the release of intoxication but not the messiness, incoherence, and stupefaction that go with it. A realistically drunk Caliban would be as useless to Shakespeare as a realistically drunk Falstaff. Thus literature, by so often detaching alcoholic euphoria from the unlovely or inconvenient side-effects, has a certain tendency to idealize intoxication, and in effect to reinforce the popular tendency to think of a depressant as though it were a stimulant.

One might speculate about the effects of this confusion on the story of Aloadine's reliance upon drugs to recruit and maintain morale. According to Italian scholar Leonardo Olschki (see his *Marco Polo's Asia*), the best contemporary Muslim historians, who would have had every reason to use such discrediting information against the Assassins, make no reference to it at all. Certainly there are problems with the popular accounts upon which Polo and Purchas relied. One is asked to believe that the concentrated ferocity of the Assassins over a long period of time is explainable in terms of an initiatory drug- or drink-induced deception reinforced later by a more or less frequent use of hashish. Perhaps the historians sensed a familiar trap here: that combination of naiveté and skepticism about the resources of the human spirit that so frequently results in truth-distorting fictions. One thinks immediately of the recent attempt to trace two thousand years of Christianity to a mushroom cult.

In any event, the historical fact about the Assassins is that they were a heretical and fanatical Muslim sect committed unconditionally to the will of a leader whom, says Olschki, they believed to be "the mythical and mystical Inman, the descendant of A'lī and thus the sole possessor of the true knowledge of God." What they were intoxicated with, then, was that strongest of drinks, true belief. Olschki's conviction, and he marshals considerable scholarly support for it, is that the Assassins presented to medieval Europe a compelling image of utter self-transcendence through unconditional obedience to an unquestioned source of power or authority, and so became a factor not only in courtly love but in the development of religious, theological, and political totalitarianism. Thus, whether we begin with Norman Cohn and the liberation heresies in medieval Europe or with Professor Olschki and the intellectual libertinism of the Assassins in the Persian highlands, we wind up with that ultimate intoxication that produces Dachau and Auschwitz.

Professor Olschki emphasizes the extent to which the disciplined terrorism of the Assassins was dedicated to a "noble" end: the creation of a universal unity of faith through the triumph of a dogmatic supreme authority. As a rule of thought and action, he says, their doctrine "implied the destruction of all intellectual freedom and of traditional Mohammedan individualism which for centuries had made possible the development and coexistence of numerous sects and the unhindered growth of simple devotion, as well as of philosophy and every other branch of knowledge."

Here we can see clearly enough that quality of intoxication, whether literal or metaphoric, that makes it the compelling human experience that it is. In its short-term efficiency as a way of handling an information overload it is hard to match,

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Intoxication is an expression of the urge to merge: positively, to experience Freud's oceanic sense; negatively, to obliterate the painful welter of information that threatens whatever integration one has managed to achieve. In Nietzschean terms, deriving from *The Birth of Tragedy*, this is a triumph of the Dionysian rapture ("whose closest analogy is furnished by physical intoxication") over the Apollonian principle of individuation so that the veil of Maya is torn "before the vision of mystical oneness." But since Apollo, the god of light, reigns "over the fair illusion of our inner world of fantasy" and is a god of illusion whatever his wisdom and beauty, it would seem to follow that to get beyond him is to get beyond information (which implies a lag, a disjunction between source and receptor) to a point or "ground" where one *is* the information. To sense oneself as synonymous with the information is the crowning achievement of intoxication. This is doubtless why all formulations that attempt to inscribe experience, at least temporarily, within a magic circle into which no other experience, perspective, or frame of reference can intrude are so routinely understood in terms of the metaphor of intoxication. Here too is the justification for the use of the metaphor of intoxication (infuriating to true believers) in order to designate the states of mind that result from the psychedelic drugs.

Nietzsche, says Norman O. Brown in his 1960 Phi Beta Kappa address, "is the measure of the holy madness, of Dionysius, the mad truth." But if Brown is talking about the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* something is missing, most specifically, Nietzsche's stress on "that Apollonian illusion which saves us from the direct identification with Dionysiac music and allows us to discharge our musical excitement on an interposed Apollonian medium." This is a more complicated Nietzsche than Brown needs, at least for his 1960 address. He wants a prophetic Nietzsche who points to a position beyond which there is no position. That is, his address is about the necessity and possibility of getting beyond point of view, which is the objective of intoxication. For Nietzsche this is like trying to get beyond interpretation to fact, and if you are going this way Nietzsche is likely to be discouraging company. Better to choose a more forthright Dionysian—someone like Antonin Artaud, for instance, to whom it was revealed in Mexico, long before Brown's address, that "madness, utopia, the unreal, and the absurd will constitute reality."

Brown's only reference to Shelley is his agreement with the Shelleyan dogma that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind," but Shelley is hard to beat as a celebrator of the urge to merge, to achieve an ecstatic and erotic unity beyond the mortal agonies of definition, complexity, and contradiction. The man who wrote "Epipsychidion" with its intense glorification of a symbiotic relationship in which the lovers, "confused in Passion's golden purity," will realize

One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation.

seems to have suffered as much from the need to get beyond point of view and to be the information as any writer in our culture. *Mutatis mutandis*, he would have made a superb court poet for Aloadine, whose young men might well have found his verses more enthralling than hashish.

Shelley wrote pure poetry in the sense that Robert Penn Warren has defined that term in his essay "Pure and Impure Poetry." Shelley is also a Platonist, after his romantic fashion. Brown too has no difficulty getting Plato on his side, especially the Plato who comes to him through the renaissance Neo-Platonists: a Plato drunk on Dionysian wine, singing in dithyrambs, speaking enigmas and mysteries that "are intrinsically esoteric, and as such an offense to democracy." With Nietzsche it is another matter. The Socrates he finds in Plato is "the mystagogue of science," the celebrator of the victory of the particular over the general, the man who in collaboration with Euripides subverted Aeschylean art. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Plato's Socrates (for whom a later Nietzsche will substitute Christianity) performs much the same function that Clifford Chatterley does in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, or that the Corporate State does in Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*. Clearly, Plato is not only the text with respect to which, as Alfred North Whitehead has observed, the rest of European philosophy is a series of footnotes, but the blank check which a bewildering variety of cashers have filled out in terms of their own shortages. Even the Assassins, according to Professor Olschki, were able to find in *The Laws* a Plato they could use as a sanction for their regimen of blind obedience.

So far as the history of intoxication is concerned, one of the most suggestive interpretations of Plato can be found in Eric Havelock's *Preface to Plato*. Professor Havelock does not mention Nietzsche, Shelley, or Norman O. Brown, but in effect he counters all three. To him the Socrates of *The Republic* is the means Plato uses in an effort to free the Greek mind from the imprisoning tradition of oral epic so that science and philosophy can happen. The world of oral epic is enclosed within a magic circle; at work in it, as in states of intoxication, is the protective impulse to close off all avenues of escape so that a *particular* world is apprehended as *the* world. To fight the good fight against poetry, then, says Havelock, is to be "a Greek St. Paul warring against the powers of darkness." The fight is not against poetry apprehended as a vision among visions but against poetry apprehended as

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a vision that attempts in totalitarian fashion to resist all competing visions. Havelock's Plato champions sobriety and point of view, though not the perspectivism of Nietzsche in which point of view is itself a prison from which there is no escape. Such a Plato gives little comfort to those convinced that poets ought to be paid more attention to as unacknowledged legislators of the world.

Havelock's Plato would be of little use to Brown, either in the Phi Beta Kappa lecture or in subsequent works. Brown is of the brotherhood of Aloadine, not because he is willing to use violence to achieve his ends, but because he aspires to be the information, to establish a closed universe in which all language is metaphor and point of view is impossible, the sanction for which is an infallible revelation available only to an elite. This is to say that they both belong to that much larger brotherhood of inebriates, the Gnostics.

Gnosticism, says Eric Voegelin in *The New Science of Politics*, is the nature of modernity. Although he acknowledges the existence of earlier pagan, Jewish, and Islamic forms, the Gnosticism that interests him both as a compelling model and a continuing political force begins in 12th-century Europe with Joachim of Flora, whose trinitarian eschatology "created the aggregate of symbols which govern the self-interpretation of modern political society to this day." In this eschatology history is conceived as a sequence of three ages "characterized as intelligible increases of spiritual fulfillment," the last of which, the Third Realm that is the age of the Holy Spirit, is terminal and millenarian. It assumes a paracletic leader, who may at the same time be the prophet of the new age possessing a special and infallible gnosis, and a brotherhood of autonomous persons. The impulse toward the Third Realm is totalistic and totalitarian: it aims, as did Aloadine's heresy, at a state of political, philosophic, and spiritual closure. The Third Realm, whether seen in the religious Gnosticism of Puritanism or in the secular Gnosticism of positivism, Marxism, and 20th-century totalitarianism, is conceived of not as a realm among realms but as an end of realms, an establishment so intoxicatingly closed that it has cancelled out the possibility of finding a critical viewpoint anywhere outside it. Taking Voegelin's route, then, we arrive once more at Dachau and Albert Speer's inebriates with their attempt to counteract the hangover from a metaphoric intoxication with a literal one. For this is what Voegelin prepares you to expect in Western civilization: a succession of intoxication-hangover experiences as one glorious Gnostic dream after another is found to be a pipedream.

Voegelin's Plato, especially in *The Republic*, takes his stand against the "untruth of human existence as it prevailed in the Athenian sophistic society," whereas Havelock's Plato counts the Sophists "as his allies in the educational battle he is waging against the poets." However, both Platos oppose a false theological consciousness. Havelock's Plato is against the kind of closure that results from the poetic "spell of the concrete" in which time is a stream that cannot be managed as an abstraction, as it must be if critical thinking is to take place. The consequence is a kind of paratactic nowness that anticipates the nowness of the electronic global village. For Havelock the trouble with the world of oral epic (to put it in contemporary terms) is that once it closes warmly around you it becomes difficult if not impossible to distinguish rock poets from philosophers, with the implication that there is little hope that the philosophy of rock poetry will not steadily deteriorate. For Voegelin the quite analogous trouble is that legislators (*pace* Shelley and Brown) are too often poets: that is, they too often strive to construct a state that is "poetic" in its closed self-sufficiency, its unity, and its utter invulnerability to exterior critical positions. Even Nietzsche, the grand perspectivist in whose view there are only fictions, is driven finally, according to Conor Cruise O'Brien, to make an absolute of the poem of the state. Perhaps this means that if we take Shelley at his word and consider *Prometheus Unbound* as a piece of unacknowledged legislation we can expect to find in it something like that Gnostic celebration of a Realm beyond realms that characterizes the political poems of Marx and Hitler.

VOEGELIN's book is now twenty years old. Some idea of the continuity between it and his present thinking can be gotten from his long essay "Postscript: On Paradise and Revolution" in the *Southern Review*, Winter 1970-71. The immediate subject here is the effects of closure in Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*, but the ultimate subject is the deformation of reality that results from "the fateful shift in Western society from existence in openness towards the cosmos to existence in the mode of closure against, and denial of, its reality." The study of this deformation entails an examination of closure in Milton and Blake, in the revolutionary consciousness as defined by Hegel, and in the ancient but continually compelling myth of the androgyne, in which tension- and conflict-causing opposites are brought into a symbiotic unity.

Voegelin, especially because of his interest in Henry James, can have the effect of emphasizing the place of a book like Quentin Anderson's recent *The Imperial Self* in the mainstream of Western political, philosophic, and religious thought. Anderson's subject is that form of American intoxication in which a glorified personal consciousness, particularly as seen in Emerson, Whitman, and James, is encouraged in its aspiration to close in on itself. For this consciousness organized society is the enemy against which it attempts to set up a counter-world in which it can expand autonomously. "All three imaginations," says An-

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derson, "are so commanding, tend so much to incorporation, that we may speak of them as performing a function for their possessors analogous to that of religion in other men. In all three the compelling character of history, generational order, places and things leaches out, tends to disappear." In effect he is very close to placing the Imperial Self in Voegelin's Gnostic tradition, in which a dream world attempts to obliterate generational order and the compelling character of history. It should be noted too that Anderson is sensitive to the Gnostic element in Brown: "he too reduces the stubborn opposition of Freud's world and accomplishes the subjection of imperial power, acquisitiveness, and heterosexuality to the individual consciousness."

But even with the advantage of prominent reviews in important journals, Anderson's often difficult book will exert little sobering influence against the intoxication of American Gnosticism. For every person who reads *The Imperial Self* a hundred will read Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*. In the apocalypse according to Reich there are all the classic signs of a Gnostic enterprise, perhaps most conspicuously the Joachite sequence of three ages culminating in Consciousness III, in which the Holy Spirit (the "new consciousness" of which from the beginning Bob Dylan has been the true prophet) is triumphant in a Realm beyond realms analogous to the Marxian State beyond states or to the Nazi Reich beyond reichs. The unitary revelation is codified in Reich's book, but its most effective existence is in the consciousness of a "brotherhood of autonomous persons" (Voegelin's terms work well here) who receive "the charismatic gifts that are necessary for the good life . . . without the administration of sacraments"—or in contemporary terms, without the mediation of traditional institutions. The person who is informed with the Reichean gnosis, no matter how young and inexperienced he may be, possesses, says Reich, "an extraordinary 'new knowledge' "; he may not have all the facts about complicated issues but he still "'knows' the truth that seems hidden from others"; he is capable of ignoring established categories, for he sees "effortlessly," "with new eyes," the phoniness and dishonesty in politics that an older person would not see without years of reeducation.

Indeed, with Reich's Third Realm we are "dealing with some dimension utterly outside of the way most people in America have become accustomed to the world." Crucial to the new dimension are rock music, which "has achieved a height of knowledge, understanding, insight and truth concerning the world, and people's feelings, that is incredibly greater than what other media have been able to express," and drugs (the connection with Aloadine's hashish eaters?) which "add a whole new dimension to creativity and experience." All of this assumes both the sacred uniqueness of the person and "an extended family in the spirit of the Woodstock Festival." In fact, in Reich's context, Woodstock, like Aloadine's fabled Garden, is both experience and foretaste of Paradise; if it is not true—and Altamont, particularly as viewed by the editorial staff of the *Rolling Stone*, suggests that there may have been at least a minor devil loose in it all along—then his faith is in vain.

THE Gnostic revolution, says Voegelin, "has for its purpose a change in the nature of man and the establishment of a transfigured society." The expectation is chiliastic, not evolutionary; it may use evolutionary terms but it strains toward the Grand Finale, the closure of a change beyond changes, a state impervious to criticism because there are no positions left outside upon which to establish a critical point of view. The new consciousness of Reich's Third Realm has a certain dialectic relation to that of the preceding two realms, but effectively the dialectic stops with it. Toward the end of his book Reich does suggest that Consciousness III "will always be growing and changing" and that we should look forward to Consciousness IV, V, and VI, "or if we say that change is inherent in the definition of III then new degrees of Consciousness III." But the tradition in which he is writing is simply "wiser" and more powerful than this attempt to modify it. The possibility of such a numerical progression therefore comes through as an afterthought that has left little if any impression on the reading public—for the obvious reason that the main thrust of the book establishes the Gnostic finality of his Third Realm. The new consciousness is prophetically celebrated rather than artistically rendered; there is no excess in it, no flaw in its unity and virtue, no worm in the apple; it can only repeat itself, assuming that it will find in change itself a constant. It is the consciousness of an Outsider "genuinely free from the lures and temptations of the Corporate State"—but an Outsider who, like Aloadine's heretics, aims to consume all sides and so make the position of Outsider forever after impossible.

In all of this there is nothing strange for Americans, whose very beginnings are tainted with Gnostic intoxication. Columbus, like so many of his contemporaries, had been influenced by Joachim of Flora. "Everywhere in his writings," Charles L. Sanford tells us in *The Quest for Paradise*, "one finds a compulsive conviction that the prophecy about proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth must be fulfilled before the approaching end of the world." In his *Book of the Prophecies*, says Sanford, Columbus wrote that the Second Coming "was to be preceded by the opening up of the New World, the conversion of the heathen, and the destruction of Antichrist or Satan." Prophecies that do not sound as if they were secular versions of this grand expectation simply do not sound authentic to us; both our need of them and their availability

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might suggest that we are not simply hard drinkers but alcoholics.

Voegelin is certainly right when, in his *Southern Review* essay, he observes that the "pressure of the Edens surrounding us is enormous." Gnostic Third Realms compete for our attention from all directions, promising final unities in supermarket variety: the schizophrenia-generating family abolished; tyrannous genital heterosexuality replaced by androgynous equality, if not by non-divisive polymorphous perversity; sectarian politics consumed by ecstasy; individual and national distinctions merged in the global village; fragmenting specialism corrected by harmonizing comprehensiveness; work ended by play, nurture by nature, and time by now. It is hardly startling to find Annie Gottlieb winding up a New York *Times Book Review* essay on fem-lib literature by quoting approvingly the conviction of a sister writer that we are moving "beyond all known standards . . . to a species with a new name, that would not dare define itself as man." She is simply aspiring to the kind of Gnostic closure (a species beyond species) that on a more prestigious level characterizes the visions of Reich, Brown, John Cage, Marcuse, and Buckminster Fuller.

Even B. F. Skinner, who in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* is so often able to expose the tradition of autonomous individuality where it is most vulnerable, aims at a condition as utterly invulnerable to any critical point of view as that of Aloadine's Garden. His Great Good Place is as airtight as a well-made poem. Perhaps the book that presents it should be thought of as Skinner's *Prometheus Unbound*: as a passionate expression of the urge to merge, not through the agency of irresistible love but of environmental manipulation. In fact, Havelock's Plato might see that Skinner no less than Brown or Reich wants to confine us within a poetic circle in which we will be all the information there is and it will be us.

In time of course Aloadine's young men ceased to be intoxicated true believers and became simply hired assassins. Falstaff, the Lord of Holiday, was ultimately banished by a young king who had learned that to confound Holiday with Everyday was simply to lose the world. Caliban gave up his dream of being "king o' the isle" and confessed that he had been "a thrice-double ass" in mistaking a drunkard for a god. Abbie Hoffman, who seems to have reacted from Woodstock much as Nietzsche reacted from Bayreuth, is reported to have said of the culture in which he so lately flourished that its long hair is affected, its hip culture fraudulent, its music bad, and its dope lousy. As for Reich's young men, many of them had begun to experience the agonies of deintoxication even before *Greening* appeared, while for many others Reich is simply their Thomas Malory who fantasizes about a Golden Age of derring-do which, since it was mainly a fiction to begin with, can never really pass away.

But no matter; other distillers with other brews are selling in the alleys, if not already moving onto the streets. To be an American is to suffer from Woodstock-in-the-head, which is no doubt a paraphrase from something in Tocqueville. Even our century-long effort to sober up was a metaphorically intoxicating effort, so that temperance crusaders like Dioclesian Lewis, Carrie Nation, and Dr. Howard Hyde Russell were in effect acting out Emily Dickinson's great line: "I taste a liquor never brewed." The trouble with Americans is that having begun with the taste of such a rare brew they have ever since had a hard time defining themselves apart from the polarities of intoxication and hangover. In their morning-after moments—such as now, following the binge of Vietnam—the frightening thought that they might drink themselves to death often occurs to them, but they just as often decide not to go on the wagon but to change brands—now, for instance, Jean-François Revel for Charles Reich.

Revel with his position that "liberation must be complete, or it will not exist at all," his insistence that to survive we must have a utopian program and that the necessary revolution will take place in the United States, is bound to give more comfort to Noam Chomsky than B. F. Skinner, but his *Without Marx or Jesus* aspires, no less than Skinner's book, to imprison us within a Gnostic Garden of Delights. Even if he is, as Mary McCarthy has suggested, less interested in flattering the United States than in shaking up an assortment of French adversaries, he is nevertheless offering Americans an intoxicant for which they have demonstrated that they have little tolerance: one more vision of Manifest Destiny.

As for manifest destinies, not even Aloadine's Assassins were surer that they had one than our spiritual ancestors, the English Puritans, and it was against their threat, as Voegelin points out, that Thomas Hobbes erected his symbol of the Leviathan. This is the all-devouring political and social order which victorious Gnostics establish when they discover that they "can neither transfigure the nature of man nor establish a terrestrial paradise." The Leviathan, acting as if intoxication were its model, strives to create a new consciousness that can imagine nothing beyond the order that makes it possible. As an omnipotent state, Voegelin concludes, the Leviathan must ruthlessly eliminate "all sources of resistance and, first of all, the troublesome Gnostics themselves." Here then is the prospect one must contemplate: the possibility that contemporary prophets of a new consciousness who have managed to convince themselves and their true believers that they are in the vanguard of a Manifest Destiny may only be directing traffic into Hobbes's pocket.

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Emancipation, Enlightenment & All That

Robert Alter

France, who first wiped out the disgrace of Judah and broke the shackles of all the captives, she is our land of Israel; her mountains—our Zion; her rivers—our Jordan.
—Samuel Halevi, *Chronique de Paris*, April 3, 1792

My countrymen . . . ? Which countrymen, the people of Dessau or the citizens of Jerusalem?
—Moses Mendelssohn, letter to Thomas Abbt, July 20, 1764

THE HISTORY of European Jewry over the past two hundred years offers an intriguing perspective on the whole confusing phenomenon of modernity partly because the Jews lurched into the modern world from their protracted medieval existence with a suddenness that was bound to be unsettling for all concerned. There were, of course, certain notable exceptions to the suddenness of the change. The Jews of Italy did undergo a real renaissance at the same time as the rest of Western Europe, and the same could be said, on a more limited temporal scale, of Dutch Jewry as well. By and large, though, the crucial transition was hurtled through in a generation or two, often in a few years of a single lifetime (Moses Mendelssohn, Solomon Maimon, Leopold Zunz, M. L. Lilienblum)—a transition from a corporate Jewish existence with roots in a feudal order to a new European world ostensibly based on unprecedented economic and intellectual individualism, committed to a principle of relentless technological innovation. The very shock of transition, then, for these new and uncertain members of a transformed Europe, on occasion throws into revealing focus underlying, and problematic, aspects of the modern European experience.

It is instructive that Jews have been accustomed to designate their own swift entry into modernity as "the Emancipation," linking that implicitly political movement of history with an ideological correlate, the Jewish Enlightenment. Emancipation is, of course, a loaded term. One can clearly speak of an emancipation in American history because black people in this country were in fact legally translated from a condition of mere chattel to free citizens, however tortuously compromised their technical state of freedom afterward proved to be. In the case of the Jews, on the other hand, the use of the term encourages one to assume that highly perplexing historical phenomena are self-evidently simple, for it is not altogether clear what was the condition of previous servitude from which the Jews were freed, or precisely what kinds of freedom they gained and what others they may have lost in their new life.

Salo Baron, the leading American-Jewish historian, has pointed out with characteristic lucidity that Jews before the Emancipation, at least in regard to the basic physical needs and cultural amenities, were actually better off than their average Christian contemporaries. Compared to the dire condition of the general populace in medieval and renaissance Europe, "one could contend [that] the Jews belonged to the privileged minority of every country in both legal theory and actual fact." Against the conventional notion of pre-modern Jewry as a pariah-people, Baron observes that under the social and legal arrangements of the medieval corporate state, the Jews as a group were able to exercise an impressive degree of legally protected autonomy: "Above all, under the older corporate system Jews enjoyed a great measure of self-determination. Even more than other corporate groups, their community enjoyed full self-government not only in religious matters—and religion embraced a much wider area of life than it does today—but also in education, the judiciary, and fiscal affairs."* Emancipation for the Jews meant first of all the surrender of this self-determination, and implied a breakdown of communal autonomy in which they themselves were encouraged to participate as active agents. Under the older system, to be sure, individual Jews were subject to the considerable coercive pressures of their own community, and the Jewish system of self-governance—the *kehillah*, or executive body of the Jewish corporation—tended to be restrictively oligarchic, for all its outward show of representative electoral process. The emancipated Jew, then, might well gain a significant measure of freedom as an individual in breaking away from the authority of the *kehillah* and the rabbinic system of belief, but he did so at the risk of exposing himself to

*"Newer Approaches to Jewish Emancipation," *Diogenes* 29 (Spring, 1960).

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new orders of coercion, surely more subtle than the old and at times perhaps more profound as well. This hardly cancels out the newly gained freedoms, but it should at least suggest that we beware of conceiving the Emancipation as a simple triumphal march from the dank medieval prisons of the ghettos to a modern world of light and latitude.

Now, it has long been recognized that there is an intimate association between the Emancipation and the broad shift of the European economy from feudalism to capitalism. Useful documentation of the connection between the two has been done by the Israeli Marxist historian, Raphael Mahler, whose work has just been made available in English for the first time.* Mahler is not always an infallible guide, because his Marxism leads him at times to facile unilinear notions of historical causation, while his ostensibly "scientific" view of the historical dialectic is in fact often strongly colored by that aggressively moralistic nationalism which commonly determines the classic Zionist cast of mind. Nevertheless, he clearly states the main terms of the economic argument, and he is particularly valuable in describing the virulent class conflicts that beset the various Jewish communities on the eve of the modern age. Mahler traces in painstaking detail the repressive measures adopted by the sundry *kehillah*-heads against the Jewish lower classes in everything from the right to work and the privilege of residence to modes of dress, and how the excesses of taxation and legal restriction drove some lower-class Jews, as in Cracow in 1812, to the threat of actual armed rebellion against the *kehillah*. Mahler thus makes a fairly plausible case for viewing the *maskilim* (proponents of Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment) as the intellectual spokesmen for the new Jewish middle classes, leading an insurrection against the rabbinic authorities and the very principle of *kehillah* autonomy because both would have impaired the freedom of economic activity of the new entrepreneurs.

As for the conditions in the surrounding society that could make the self-assertion of these new classes possible, Mahler's view is clear and forthright, if predictable: "The economic interests of the rising bourgeoisie postulated the abolition of the legal restrictions to which Jewish capital was subjected. This was in accordance with one of the chief slogans of the new class: an unimpeded clear path for the forces of capitalism. . . . The ideas of human equality and of the natural rights of man were rightfully applicable to the Jewish problem and the status of the Jews." This seems by and large just, though it was probably more often Jewish entrepreneurial skills rather than Jewish capital that served the interests of the rising bourgeoisie. (Jacob Katz, in his classic study, *Tradition and Crisis*,† points out that the Jews, generally excluded from extensive land-owning and agriculture, unable to aspire to upper-class status or ultimate political power, forced into a strictly utilitarian attitude toward their economic environment and their own business dealings, were ideal managers and investors for the growing abundance of liquid capital.) What may need more substantive qualification in Mahler's statement is the implication that the European Enlightenment's ideological commitment to the rights of man was a direct function of the need to have a clear path for the free play of economic forces. One would hardly want to deny a serious connection between the two, but Marxist historiography, as Yehezkel Kaufmann argued long ago, tends to confuse necessary conditions with sufficient conditions in its notions of economic causation, thus denying ideas any momentum of their own in the significant play of historical forces.* *

HISTORIANS, however, are no more disposed than other kinds of people to learn from the mistakes of their predecessors. After all, one proven way of giving a momentary appearance of originality when you are devoid of originality is to restate ideas that need qualification in the most baldly unqualified way. That formula says most of what needs to be said about Ellis Rivkin's *The Shaping of Jewish History*,†† though Rivkin's insistent claims for the profound significance of his own thesis make the book thoroughly irritating as well as silly, and invite some setting-to-rights. Rivkin subtitles his book, "A Radical New Interpretation," with a hovering ambiguity in the use of "radical," since he would like to take advantage of the term's current chic—his history is "hard-boiled and radical," he says in the Introduction—but the order of the two adjectives indicates that the interpretation is radical mainly in its self-avowed newness, while the author turns out to be an apologist for capitalism of a sort that the National Association of Manufacturers would not dare to invent in its most self-indulgent fantasies.

Rivkin puts us on notice several times at the outset of his study that he has "broken new ground," that he is proposing views which, to his knowledge, have "never been advocated previously by any other scholar." The key to his originality is a conception of economic causation

*A *History of Modern Jewry: 1780-1815*, Schocken, 742 pp., $15.00. This ponderous, lamentably unselective compilation of factual details is, mercifully, an abridgment of the four-volume Hebrew version that appeared in Tel Aviv in the early 50's.

† *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, Schocken Paperbacks, 280 pp., $2.95. (A reissue of the 1961 English translation; the Hebrew original appeared in 1958.) See especially Chapters VI and VII.

** Kaufmann's (untranslated) critique of Marxist historiography is still worthy of attention. See *Golah ve'Neikhar* (Tel Aviv, 1929), vol. 1, pp. 51-107.

†† Scribner's, 256 pp., $7.95.

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in history so simplistic that it is almost breathtaking. Others have wrestled with the unprecedented monstrosity of the Nazi program of genocide; Rivkin explains it in a quick sweep of the pen: "The economic, social, and political problem of dealing with surplus labor and surplus production makes intelligible the Nazi plan for exterminating Jews and thirty million or so Slavs." The fate of Jews since World War II offers no greater obstacle to explanation: "The existence of the State of Israel and the freedom Jews enjoy throughout the West can be attributed to the rise and spread since 1945 of a new form of social revolutionary [*sic*] capitalism." As for the resurgent Soviet anti-Semitism that has of late much exercised Kremlinologists and connoisseurs of the Russian soul, that is "the consequence of the failure of Marxist systems, when in power, to solve the problem of agricultural productivity—i.e., anti-Semitism there can be directly correlated with the failure of the food supply."

What does such a relentlessly economic view of history make of the Emancipation? Ever the "hard-boiled" historian, Rivkin states his case in the most absolute terms: "Capitalism and capitalism alone emancipated the Jews." He then proceeds to spell out the mechanism of causation that was implicit in Mahler's view of the phenomenon:

> The pattern of Jewish emancipation reveals as does no other that *developing* capitalism generates individual freedom, so that the entrepreneur will be free to test his ideas for making profit. Neither he nor anyone else can be certain in advance that his ideas will reap a profit; but he must have a climate that will be supportive to his innovating notions. Such a climate cannot be turned on and off arbitrarily. It must be built into the structure, institutions, and laws of society. Thus the freedom to pursue profit necessitates the generation of freedom for the individual. The realm of ideas is thrown open for free exploration by those who seek truth and knowledge rather than profit. Thus capitalism bred free thinkers.

This has a certain superficial plausibility, but all the connections made—those disconcertingly assured "thus" 's—are far too simple, and the proposed causal link between free enterprise and free thought finally explains almost nothing about Spinoza, Kant, Hume, Montesquieu, Rousseau, the genesis of their thought and its historical impact. What is most disturbing, however, is the assumption of an automatic mechanism in "developing capitalism" that makes for ever greater freedom. Rivkin may well possess the most untroubled faith in progress of any writer since Condorcet. Developing capitalism, seen by him in the beatifying glow of a truly messianic belief, always and inevitably liberates. All of the gross obscenities perpetrated in the capitalist period can be put down to periods of "stagnation" when capitalism's forward movement has been temporarily arrested. American foreign policy since World War II, because it is conceived as the function of a new dynamic stage of developing capitalism, is characterized as "global" rather than nationalist in its aims, "anti-imperialist," benign in its total effect and direction, moving steadily toward a world of equitably distributed goods and universal freedom for the individual.

It may seem gratuitously cruel to summarize ideas so transparently assailable, though it would be crueler still to quote them in their author's own formulation. The dubiety, however, of Rivkin's analysis of contemporary events exposes the fatuousness of his whole progressivist conception of history; and that in turn suggests how any uncompromising economic system of historical explanation, whether orthodox socialist or neo-capitalist, tends to assume a great leap forward in the process of Emancipation when that is precisely what needs to be demonstrated. It should be self-evident that economic systems require political means for their implementation, so that societies seeking to make profit in a certain manner will be impelled to create the social and political conditions necessary for the achievement of that end. Some causal relation, therefore, between nascent capitalism and the granting of political rights and freedom of movement and occupation to Jews can hardly be gainsaid, though the point was made long before Rivkin, and far more judiciously, by Mahler, Baron, and, most strategically, by Jacob Katz. The gap, however, between formal and actual freedom, as Baron's argument suggests, remains to be measured. In any case, when one moves from politics to the realm of ideas, from Emancipation to Enlightenment, the causal connection between capitalism and a movement of liberation becomes problematic, and the nature of the liberation itself proves to be highly ambiguous. That ambiguity, of course, is precisely what is most instructive about the entry of the Jews into modern Europe, and precisely what is missed by viewing Emancipation and Enlightenment under the simple aspect of Progress.

THE Jewish Enlightenment, in both its German and Hebrew manifestations, often did affirm the values of the new Jewish bourgeoisie, as Mahler repeatedly contends. Again, Rivkin states the case as flatly as possible: "The *Haskalah* movement can be called the ideological program of those Jews saying 'yes' to developing capitalism." Though the total lack of qualification here should give any reader pause, there is a good deal of evidence to be cited in support of the thesis. In the earliest Reform congregations in Berlin and elsewhere, sermons were actually preached, after the fashion of some of the English Dissenters, in praise of the earnest

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striving for wealth and the scrupulous employment of time in productive effort. Hebrew fiction of the Haskalah tends typically to project the values of the new burgher class: the moral model often is a character who is a productive and responsible member of modern European society, ideally with a degree in engineering or pharmacy, wearing decent Western dress, circumspect in his dealings with his fellow men, guiding his life calmly upon principles of pragmatic rationality. One can also find, especially among the German *maskilim*, a contempt for and dissociation from the Jewish masses, as though the newly-arrived bourgeois felt called upon to affirm repeatedly, "*We* are not like that rabble—our breath doesn't stink, we are cleanshaven, we serve good German food on the best china." Mahler argues that Moses Mendelssohn's vehement rejection of his own native language, Yiddish—he even wondered whether its use might not contribute to "immorality"!—expressed a bourgeois snobbish contempt for the lower classes. This strikes me as too facile a judgment, since Yiddish was equally the language of Jewish indigents and of the established householders and merchants who controlled the *kehillah*. The rejection of Yiddish, then, would be not merely a matter of class attitudes but of self-rejection, at least insofar as the self is embedded in the matrix of the total culture where it initially develops.

This point has been aptly made by Michael A. Meyer in his carefully discriminating study of the German-Jewish Enlightenment: "Psychologically there seems to be a trace of self-hate or simple shame in Mendelssohn's strange reasonings; ideologically the old speech represented for him the past which must be overcome and the very counterpole of the 'culture' which must be achieved."* The judiciousness of Meyer's general analysis and the decorous literacy of his prose are especially noteworthy because he is Ellis Rivkin's student, and he could scarcely have acquired these virtues from his teacher. One might have hoped for a broader horizon of psychological speculation in Meyer's study, since it is meant to deal with the problem of identity, but he does a responsible job in laying out the pertinent biographical facts for the figures he discusses, and he clearly perceives the area of most abiding interest in his subject: "From the time that Mendelssohn first openly confronted the problem of being both Jew and European until the disillusion of the young Zunz, the cultural environment changed radically but the existential problem of Jewish self-definition remained constant. Again and again a mute Jewish consciousness reached out for self-explanation, but ever fell short of an adequate justification."

Meyer seems to me to place emphasis on precisely the right terms. The first fact of consciousness for Jews emerging from the old Jewish communal structures was the need to *justify* their existence, a need whose urgency has not altogether abated during the course of two centuries, not even after the realization of Zionism. One understands only too well why *The Trial* was written by a Prague Jew, and why, moreover, that novel has become one of the paradigmatic texts for modern readers. What I am suggesting is that the Emancipation provides special illumination on the often-asserted notion that the modern Jewish experience is the general modern experience writ large. Identity becomes more of a pressing problem for everyone as the traditional frameworks of family, community, class, and confession break apart, and so the need to justify one's existence becomes general. A new class-consciousness cannot provide the invariable key to the problem of identity precisely because class affiliation itself is now a partly-open option, one variable of identity rather than its inevitable and naturally-assumed context. The individual who finds himself in the condition of anomie endemic to the new mobile societies is likely to be considerably more anguished, and to enjoy considerably greater possibilities for personal growth, than the member of a traditional society; is likely to possess an immensely larger capacity for freedom and a concomitantly enlarged susceptibility to enslavement as the seductive way out of the pangs of self-definition. One of the greatest spiritual temptations of modern existence is to surrender one's precarious identity to an elite group or cultural milieu, a charismatic leader, a proximate social class, or, above all, to some ideological fundamentalism; and Jews since the beginning of the Emancipation have provided abundant and painful examples of the various strategies of surrender.

The proponents of Enlightenment among German Jewry, as Meyer's study indicates, are fascinating precisely because of their inner struggles to mediate between some sense of their own individual and group integrity and the compelling desire to be accepted by an admired host culture that would have retained grave misgivings about them no matter what they did to find favor. These vacillations issued, variously, in a theology that reduced Judaism to a "natural religion" virtually interchangeable with Christianity but for a few outward trappings; in a hollow apologetic doctrine of a Mission of Israel to the Gentiles; in an ideology of self-obliteration through conversion; in the reduction of Jewish tradition to a neutral object of scientific research by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* or to a repository of aesthetic value by the Hebrew Enlightenment. Almost any of these sundry grapplings with self-definition could illustrate that ideas—indeed, even words—generate a causative momentum of their own,

* *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824*, Wayne State University Press, 249 pp., $8.50.

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however simple it may seem at first to trace their origins to class-consciousness and economic needs.

The Hebrew Enlightenment is a case in point. The major Hebrew poetic text of the Berlin Haskalah is Naphtali Herz Weisel's *Songs of Glory* (1789-1802), a didactic epic on the Exodus and the life of Moses. The prudential ethic of practical rationality insisted upon by Weisel in the poem could indeed be linked with the values of the new bourgeoisie, and his very imitation of Klopstock and other would-be epic poets of 18th-century Germany might be interpreted sociologically as an attempt to adapt "Oriental" Hebrew literature to the *bienséances* of polite letters as they were understood by contemporary European society. Nevertheless, it should be observed that the turning of poetry to an ancient pastoral setting represents not a reflection of bourgeois values but, at least in one sense, a reaction against them; and the assumption of a national theme, for all the distance from nationalism of the early Haskalah, eventually proved to be momentous. The next two generations of Hebrew writers followed Weisel in devoting attention to biblical materials, often with a more pronounced bucolic atmosphere, less didactic and more lyrical (the stylistic decision to go back from rabbinic to biblical Hebrew of course played an important role here). This literary activity in turn helped prepare the ground of consciousness for the back-to-the-soil romantic nationalism of the Lovers of Zion (*Hovevei Zion*)—a consummation that could scarcely have been foreseen by the German *maskilim*, who dreamt of transcending the old notions of Jewish nationhood in an enlightened cosmopolitan Europe.

What especially complicated the struggle for identity among emancipated European Jews was not their marginality but the stimulating, frustrating combination of marginality and centrality that characterized their location in cultural and economic life. Perhaps the most striking instance of this paradoxical phenomenon is the "salon Jewesses"—most notably, Dorothea Mendelssohn (Moses' daughter), Henriette Herz, and Rahel Varnhagen—who were the mistresses of philosophers and poets and whose homes became the lively center of intellectual society in Berlin at the height of the Romantic period. As an early and significant stage in the so-called adventure of assimilation, the salon Jewesses are chiefly memorable for their energy of self-negation as Jews: it is sobering to note that all three of the celebrated Berlin intellectual hostesses eventually converted to Christianity. Yet they were also on occasion pricked by a positive if anxious consciousness of their residual Jewish identity, as Michael Meyer's account makes clear. Rahel Varnhagen may well be the first modern Jew to have built the condition of being an outsider into a kind of ideology: to be a Jew meant for her to live with the awareness of ineradicable distance between oneself and one's surroundings, and that was a destiny to be gladly assumed by the sensitive individual because it brought with it self-conscious suffering, intensity, sharpness of perception—in short, personal authenticity. Looking back on Jewish history, Rahel could contemplate "with sublime rapture . . . these, my origins and this whole web of destiny, by which the oldest memories of the human race are connected with the latest circumstances," but in the next breath she could go on to express her identification with Mary weeping for her son on the cross. The conversions of the salon Jewesses were made out of passionate Romantic enthusiasm for Christianity, not from motives of mere social convenience. The point is worth stressing because what is finally interesting in their turning to the faith of the host culture is the moment of radical self-rejection in their personal quests for identity.

Thus Dorothea Mendelssohn, who after all grew up in the home of one of the most admired intellectual figures of Enlightenment Germany, could stigmatize her family as Philistines and, on a note of vulgar anti-Semitism, describe her brother Abraham as "an unfeeling barbarian . . . not one whit better than any Berlin Jew, except that he has even finer underwear and even coarser arrogance." Correspondingly, in a letter to Schleiermacher, she could express her abhorrence for "the old Judaism" that stood in such gross contrast to Protestantism, "the religion of Jesus and the religion of culture." Dorothea Mendelssohn began her personal adventure out of an impelling need to assert her independence, but she moved through the stations of subordination of self to self-effacement not only in her relationship to Christianity but also in her long affair with Friedrich Schlegel, who progressively became the great motive and end of her existence. The surrender of self would in any case have had its allure for her as a woman committed to an unconventional search for self-realization in the unyielding medium of 19th-century European society, but that allure was made almost irresistible by the fact that she was also, in the fullest problematic sense of the term, an emancipated Jew.

THERE IS, finally, a profoundly disconcerting quality of innocence in views of the Emancipation like those of Mahler and Rivkin. One thing which the last two hundred years should have taught us all, which we are reminded of daily in vocal manifestations of contemporary political life, is that the most encompassing suppression of freedoms can be enacted in the name of—even in the sincerest affirmation of—a great ideal of freedom. The ideologues of Enlightenment, as they imagined dismantling the coercive systems of the old order, tended also to project new systems and institu-

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tions where individuals, in the rationally planned new world, would have to conform to a particular ideal of "freedom." It is hardly accidental that the first great European revolution ended in a reign of terror, or that the 19th-century intellectual heirs to the Enlightenment provided the ideological bases upon which modern totalitarianism was built. Arthur Hertzberg, in his study of the French Enlightenment,* has demonstrated the existence of a strong absolutist strain in Enlightenment thought, preeminently in Voltaire, and he argues persuasively that attitudes toward the Jews provide an especially sensitive measure of this underlying direction. It is predictable that the Revolutionary counsels should have heatedly debated the status of the Jews, committed on the one hand to granting equality to all citizens in the new secular state, feeling on the other hand that these aliens had to renounce much of their own distinctive past and remake themselves in the image of the new Frenchman if they were to be acceptable at all. Hertzberg's summary of the French Revolution's impact on the Jews nicely defines the double-edged thrust of the supposed Emancipation:

> Two roads led from the Revolution. One was paved by the decrees of emancipation. In their ultimate effect in Europe as a whole, they allowed the Jews to enter into society as equal citizens before the law and as participants in the general culture. On this road there appeared a great galaxy of creative spirits who were among the makers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, a certain discomfort was inherent in their situation; it caused pain in the souls of many. This "new Jew" had been born into a society which asked him to keep proving that he was worthy of belonging to it. Unfortunately, this "new Jew" was never quite told exactly what he had to prove and before which tribunal.

In Prussia, then Germany, where political conditions prevented the Enlightenment from issuing in revolution, the lines of connection with the pre-modern past were somewhat different, but the general pattern of ambiguity in the ostensible freedom extended to the Jews was the same. Among French Enlightenment thinkers, as Hertzberg shows, a current of neo-paganism carried along with it a resurgence of the pagan variety of anti-Semitism that had been articulated in classical antiquity. In Germany, even as secularization spread, even in the new age of "developing capitalism," the ideas and attitudes about Jews and national identity fostered by pre-capitalist Christianity exhibited an enormous momentum of their own. This persistence and rechanneling of old Christian feelings in the wake of the Emancipation have recently been illuminated with painstaking care and precision by the Israeli historian, Uriel Tal, in a study of the confrontations between Christianity and Judaism in the Second Reich.† The subtitle of Tal's work is "Historical Processes on the Road to Totalitarianism," and without the slightest tendency to impose the lineaments of the Third Reich on the Second, he is utterly persuasive in tracing the shriveling of one, hopeful political idea and the growth of another, ultimately pernicious one. German Jews, many of them wanting, despite the epidemic of baptisms, to maintain some sort of distinctive identity as a group and at the same time to achieve full integration into German society, based their expectations on a rationalistic conception of the state as a secular entity that would grant equal rights to all its members, regardless of belief or ethnic origin. They assumed, in other words, the full freight of implication of the term "emancipation" as the proper definition of their own condition within the modern state.

WHAT IS MOST telling in Tal's minutely documented account of the failure of this idea is the fact that even the liberal Protestants, who ostensibly shared with the Jews a rationalistic Enlightenment conception of society, actually insisted on the Christian nature of German national consciousness and hence finally on a mystique of organic national community compounded of belief and blood. Both Jews and liberal Protestants generally supported separation of church and state in these years of the *Kulturkampf* and its aftermath, but for the Protestants separation meant that Christian values, Christian submission and discipline vis-à-vis the state, were now to be internalized by the individual citizen whose citizenship, after all, had profoundly religious implications because his nation was more and more conceived as the center of a movement of redemption in history. Thus, the so-called German citizen of Mosaic persuasion envisaged by the Enlightenment proved to be a contradiction in terms, and the Jew was once again, in the context of a new political theology, the archetypal figure of the man irrevocably excluded from the community of the elect.

It is easy enough to see the linear connection between anti-Semitism as a formal, pseudo-scientific ideology in the Second Reich and the horrors of the Third Reich, but Tal's study significantly demonstrates how, in specific regard to the vexing question of the place of the Jews, large segments of German society, including some of its most *progressive* elements, evinced a conceptual readiness for totalitarianism at a time when ideological anti-Semitism was limited to a

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* *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, Columbia University Press, 420 pp., $12.50; this book was reviewed in COMMENTARY by Jacob Katz, October 1968.

† *Yahadut ve'Natzrut ba'Reich ha'Sheni: Tahalikhim Histori'im ba'Derekh le'Totalitariut*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 315 pp.

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small, strident minority. The accelerating development of industrial capitalism in 19th-century Germany may have encouraged the affirmation of certain libertarian ideals, but at the same time, even in liberal circles, the ideological ground was prepared for the total denial of individual liberty.

ANY serious contemplation of the Emancipation is bound to be sobering, though it need not be entirely discouraging. The ultimate expectation by the majority culture of a complete internalization of its values could obviously lead Jews to a total abdication of self—always with the fear that even that would be unavailing—and in contrast to such a fate the ghetto Jew might be considered to have enjoyed real inner freedom. Ahad Ha-am, writing in Odessa in 1901 with sharp irony about his "Western brethren," pointedly characterized their condition as "slavery within freedom." Yet the preciousness of the freedom can hardly be discounted. There are awesome risks and challenges in being exposed to a pervasive atmosphere of psychological coercion, but one is not necessarily its helpless victim, and it is in more than a superficial sense liberating to be freed of external restraints, free to participate as one wishes in civic and cultural life, to live where one chooses and do the work one wants, to determine many of the significant terms of one's own existence. What the Emancipation opened up was not a simple vista of freedom but the opposed alternatives of slavery-within-freedom and freedom-within-freedom; and the experience of two centuries has only shown what might have been expected: how arduous it is to take the second of these paths.

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Community Control Revisited

Diane Ravitch

THE Ocean Hill-Brownsville Demonstration District is by now a symbol of the movement for community control of public schools. At the time of its inception in mid-1967, Ocean Hill-Brownsville—one of three such demonstration districts in New York City—represented an attempt to address the problem of massive educational retardation in ghetto schools which had been revealed in the school-by-school reading scores released by the New York City Board of Education at the end of 1966. By decentralizing the mammoth city school system and giving black parents and educators a chance to rescue pupils from the stultifying grip of the white civil-service bureaucracy—so the argument of its proponents went—community control would significantly improve the educational achievement of ghetto children.

To be sure, there were many other reasons advanced for supporting community control as a *political* strategy, but its adherents were all agreed that the schools' failure to educate ghetto children —on the verifiable, objective, and undeniable evidence of low reading scores—was in itself compelling argument for change. Ocean Hill-Brownsville, by virtue of events the most public of the city's three demonstration districts, was the arena where community control *as an educational reform* was most visibly on trial.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville survived as a separate, experimental district for three academic years, from the fall of 1967 until June 1970. Its first year was devoted to getting set up, starting new programs, probing the limits of the authority accorded by the central board; it was also a year of thrust and parry between the district's elected governing board and the United Federation of Teachers, culminating in the involuntary transfer (or firing) of nineteen teachers and supervisors on May 9, 1968. The second year was one of conflict and controversy; in the first three months of the fall semester, teachers were out on strike all over the city, while the schools of Ocean Hill remained open, staffed by their own, anti-UFT personnel. Following the strikes, Ocean Hill-Brownsville operated with its own teachers, as well as those few UFT teachers who chose to remain after the final strike settlement. In its last year, the district (which was abolished by the 1969 decentralization law and absorbed into the larger District 23) received $4 million in state and federal funds to establish a Community Education Center, thus getting a well-subsidized opportunity to demonstrate educational effectiveness.

During the fall 1968 strikes, a steady stream of prominent visitors made the long trip out to Ocean Hill. These visitors may have expected to encounter their private vision of a ghetto school: bleak, chaotic, repressed. Instead, they discovered schools where the latest educational innovations were in use. There were self-programmed reading materials, a Montessori-type kindergarten, a Bereiter-Engelmann program, extensive employment of paraprofessionals, the Madison Math Project, a bilingual school, and an Afro-American Studies Center. To many who had become discouraged with compensatory education (too expensive and of questionable impact) and integration (politically impossible where most needed), community control appeared to offer the solution to a vexing quandary: quality education in the depths of the urban ghetto.

Many of those who published their impressions of Ocean Hill believed that they had seen the future and that it worked. I. F. Stone made the trip to Ocean Hill and reported that it was "like waking from a nightmare," compared to what he had been led to expect. "The visit was therapeutic . . . the real concern within the embattled district was simply to create effective schools. . . . I felt it would be a tragedy if this experiment in community control were shut down." He described district officials: "I have never met a more devoted group of people. All of them are harassed and overworked but sustained by a combination of desperation and joy, desperation because they fear the experiment may soon be wiped out under union pressure, joy in a chance to demonstrate in the little time they have what community control could accomplish. . . . *And their focus is on the child.*" In Stone's assessment, the parents wanted better education, while the union and the bureaucracy were fighting to perpetuate their special privileges.

During the same period, the noted literary critic Alfred Kazin wrote an article in the New York *Times* about his visit to Ocean Hill-Brownsville. He had grown up in the district and recalled the fervor for education of the poor Jewish immigrants who lived there. In his article, titled "The Holy Flame of Learning," he

DIANE RAVITCH, *a new contributor, is a Fellow of the Institute of Philosophy and Politics of Education at Teachers College (Columbia). Her political history of the New York City public-school system,* The Great School Wars of New York City: 1805-1969, *will be published later this year by Outerbridge and Lazard.*

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wrote that "the flame burns hotter than ever. . . .The intentness all over the place audibly vibrated in my ears."

Another visitor, Dwight Macdonald, publicly repudiated his previous endorsement of a pro-UFT statement. He returned from Ocean Hill impressed by "the friendly, serious, relaxed atmosphere. . . . Ocean Hill reinforced the prejudice I've always had in favor of amateurs who don't know how to do it but, as the etymology suggests, love doing it."

ADMIRERS of the district quite naturally expected that the new educational atmosphere in Ocean Hill would contribute to positive educational results. Thus, for example, Nat Hentoff, writing in the *Village Voice*: ". . . ghetto children *can* learn if teachers are convinced they can learn. In the unlikely event the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experimental district is at peace for the next two years, I would expect a substantial rise in achievement in those schools because of the staff that has been there from the beginning of the school year. I have no idea how many of them are fully licensed, and I don't think it matters in view of their attitude toward the children." This column was written in the fall of 1968; the Ocean Hill district did survive for two academic years afterward, though not "at peace."

Some sympathizers of Ocean Hill and community control went beyond personal reactions and speculation to declare in the heat of battle that Ocean Hill had *already* achieved academic success, that it had made the breakthrough in ghetto education which so many others had fruitlessly sought, and that it was the crest of an irresistible wave. Statements from Rhody McCoy, unit administrator of the project, and from the project's governing board, fed this conviction. A typical press release, soon after the strikes were settled, claimed that

> From September 9, till the teachers' strike was settled on November 19, the Ocean Hill community proved to the entire world that, with 580 Principals, Assistant Principals and teachers who respected us and our children under real community control, our children could learn as never before. Forget all the so-called arguments of "due-process." Forget all the tales of whether "decentralization" was dead or alive . . . remember only that our 9,000 children really started learning. . . .

The district's self-evaluation was taken at face-value by many outsiders. For instance, Fred Ferretti wrote in *New York* magazine that Rhody McCoy had "wrought, in slightly over a year, deep organic change in the eight schools of the district. . . . It is revolutionary in this white- and blue-collar city today to believe that children in an almost totally black neighborhood might possibly be taught to read as well as kids in 'better' all-white schools. McCoy believes it and the kids in Ocean Hill-Brownsville *are* reading better, despite the pamphlets of the United Federation of Teachers. It is a revolutionary thought to most whites that black and Spanish-speaking kids might actually *like* to go to school." Ferretti declared that McCoy's innovative reading course "has succeeded in raising the reading levels of many children in the district in a remarkably short time."

Similar sentiments were advanced by the New York Civil Liberties Union, which entered the conflict during the strikes with a one-sided blast at the UFT. The NYCLU did not contend that community control was a panacea. It did, however, conclude that, "with all the vicissitudes of the past year, there continue to be signs that the experiment in local community control is bringing about substantial improvements in education in Ocean Hill-Brownsville." They saw these "improvements" as "an encouraging sign that a real breakthrough may be made in bringing about educational equality."

In what must have been the most foolish document to appear during the entire contretemps, the New York Urban Coalition asserted that community control was the "one answer" to the failure of the public schools. The Urban Coalition took out a full-page advertisement in the New York *Times* with the headline, "If it works for Scarsdale, it can work for Ocean Hill." The advertisement implied that the public schools of upper-income, suburban Scarsdale were better than those of New York City simply because Scarsdale has community control. The education task force of the Urban Coalition consisted essentially of two groups: high-powered businessmen and lawyers who knew little about the public schools, and militant blacks and Puerto Ricans who were deeply committed to total community control. The former relied on the latter to inform them about the school system. The New York Urban Coalition may have been alone in contending that community control was the "one answer" to the complex problems of the city's schools, but it was hardly alone in its belief that community control would result in higher educational achievement.

POLITICAL support for Ocean Hill was intimately tied to the conviction that the district was achieving dramatic educational gains. Academic verification for the claims made by Rhody McCoy came from the Queens College Institute for Community Studies, which funneled more than $1 million in Ford Foundation grants to the demonstration districts and which both assisted and observed their operations. *Community*, the publication of the Institute, stated in mid-1969 that "at this point reports are being filed with the district office which attest to the effectiveness of the program. Some children have jumped several grades in basic skills and there are at least two cases of students skipping five grade levels."

While the state legislature was arguing the future of the school system in the spring of 1969, a new claim was put forward in a television debate between Jerome Kretchmer, who was then an Assemblyman and the leader of the community-control forces in the legislature, and Albert Shanker, head of the UFT. Kretchmer quoted Rhody McCoy as saying "that by February 1, 1970, every youngster in that school system will be classified as a reader. There will no longer be any students in that school system, in that district, classified as non-readers." That is the

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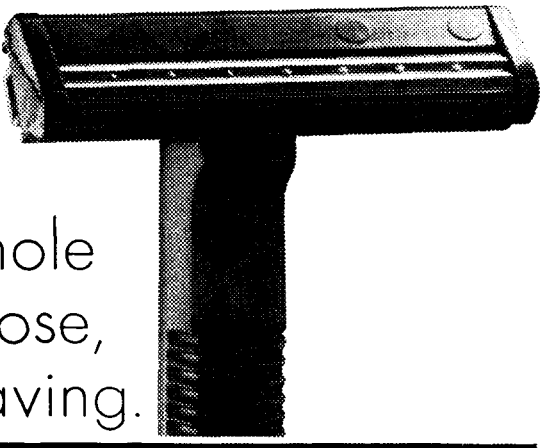

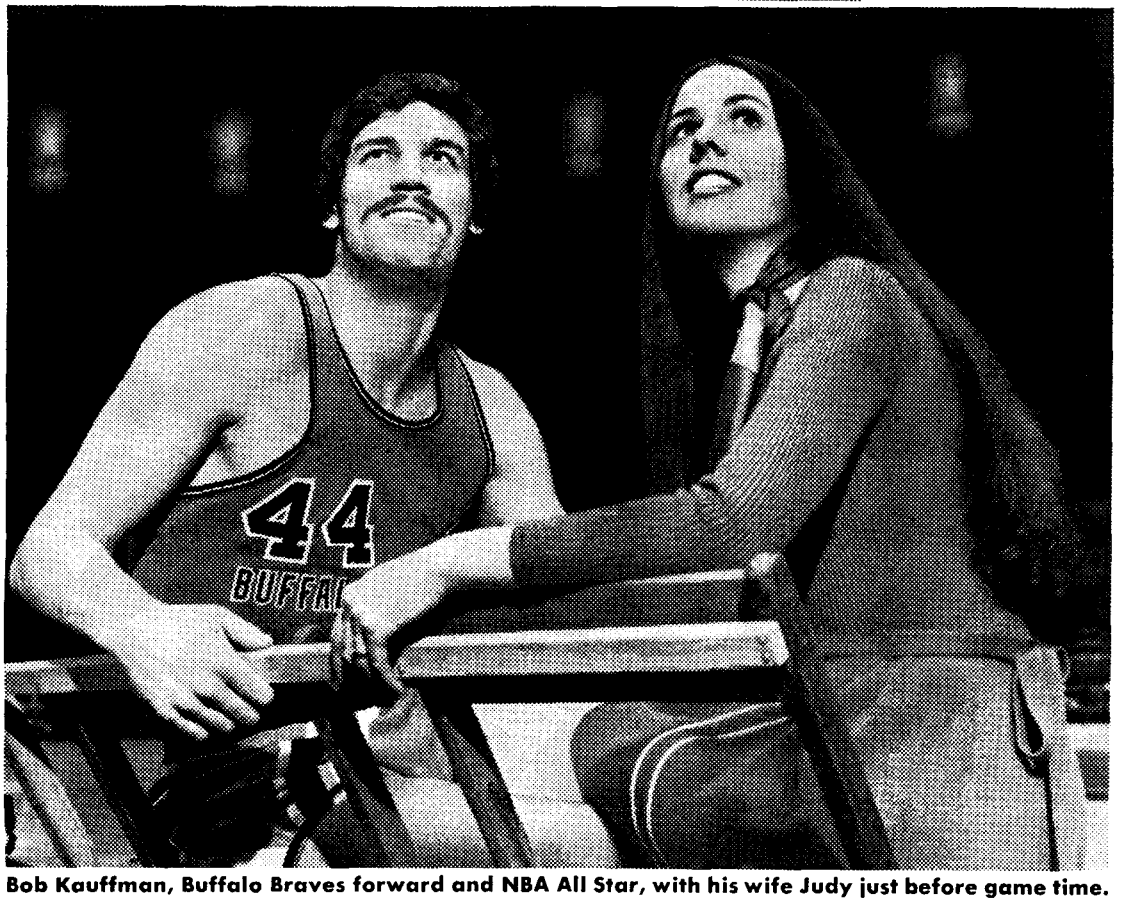

Bob Kauffman, Buffalo Braves forward and NBA All Star, with his wife Judy just before game time.

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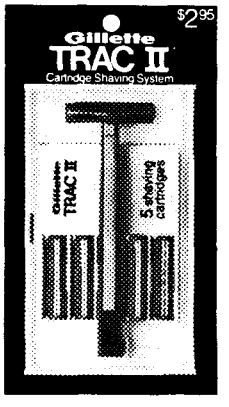

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kind of change, said Kretchmer, to be expected from a decentralized system, "if we allow that system to have a little bit of its own head." Shanker protested, apparently to no effect, that Ocean Hill had no way of knowing such statistics, since it was the only district in the city which had not participated in the standardized citywide reading tests.

By this time, however, some supporters of the district were saying that it should not be judged on the basis of reading scores in any case, since these were a "fraudulent" gauge of children's learning. A teacher at JHS 271 complained in an article in the New York *Times Magazine* that the project would be "evaluated in terms of the established conventional criteria: reading scores, discipline, standardized achievement tests, etc. . . .We have a problem when these criteria fail to measure the extent to which a child has been educated, when they simply test rote memorization, stifling of initiative and training in sitting through standardized examinations. Unleashed creativity, or a critical outlook, for example, would probably lower a child's scores on these exams, rather than raise them." The teacher concluded nevertheless that since these "conventional criteria" would determine the survival of the project, "we must miseducate the children before we will be allowed to educate them." Implicitly, then, he accepted the necessity of teaching children to master standardized tests of reading and mathematics before winning the freedom to "unleash" their creativity.

The significance of reading scores was also denigrated by advocates of community control in the academic-foundation world. In *Community Control and the Urban School,* Mario Fantini (Ford Foundation), Marilyn Gittell (Queens College Institute for Community Studies), and Richard Magat (Ford Foundation) held that reading scores reflected static, cognitive learning, which was less desirable than affective learning, that is, personality-conscious, humanistic education. They predicted that community-controlled schools would evolve into "humanistic patterns" which would be more sensitive to children's needs than bureaucratically-controlled schools.

There was something of a contradiction in these reformist views. On the one hand, the single issue which had stimulated widespread disaffection with the public school system was the hard data of reading scores which showed large numbers of children unable to read at grade level. Yet many of the same people who had brandished these figures in high indignation were now saying that reading scores had little to do with learning. McCoy had to satisfy two constituencies at once: the academic-foundation types who held the purse strings, and the parents of the district who wanted demonstrable academic progress.

Rhody McCoy resolved the dilemma ingeniously. Throughout 1968 and 1969, he refused to submit the children of his district to any tests, but nevertheless continued to release figures attesting to the rapid improvement of reading scores. On the eve of the community school-board elections in the spring of 1970, which community-control partisans boycotted, McCoy distributed a notice to parents of the district, which began:

March 1970

VITAL FACTS:

THE DISTRICT HAS JUST COMPLETED ITS PROGRESS report on the reading and math abilities of our elementary school children.

THIS IS A REPORT SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL. A more detailed report will soon be made public. Schools and the number of pupils who have made substantial progress (grades 3, 4, 5). P.S. 73—67%, P.S. 87—76%, P.S. 137—66%, P.S. 144—55%, P.S. 155—58%, P.S. 178—69%.

NOTE: THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE PUPILS:

1. Already on or above grade level.
2. Pupils with excessive absence.
3. Pupils not here in September or who have had only one test.
4. *The district average is 64% reported from November to March.*

The rest of the "progress report" was devoted to urging parents not to vote in the school-board elections; one of the consequences of voting, wrote McCoy, would be to "legalize your child's failure" and to "end all of the programs that are working well for your children." The notice did not define what "substantial progress" was, what the cited percentages represented, how many pupils were tested, or what kind of test was used. To date, neither city nor state education officials know of any achievement tests administered in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

ALMOST two years have now passed since the dissolution of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville project, and neither state nor city authorities have as yet evaluated this much-publicized, highly controversial experiment. This fact is not the least remarkable of the many remarkable aspects of Ocean Hill-Brownsville. From the start, considered simply as an experiment, it was ill-conceived. There was no control group or any other standard by which to gauge its effectiveness. State officials who were assigned to the offices of the district now claim that there was no systematic or reliable record-keeping and that any other district which handled its internal affairs so inefficiently would have been dissolved by state authorities. Furthermore, the records and reports of the state trustees who supervised the district after the strikes, as well as the papers of the state supervisory committee (which protected teachers' rights citywide as part of the strike settlement), have been locked away and may never be seen again. It is as though a conscious effort were being made to close the book on Ocean Hill-Brownsville forever.

So long as the Ocean Hill district existed, its officials refused to administer the standardized reading tests which were given to other city schools. State officials, sympathetic to the district's rejection of the city's lockstep procedures, invited the district to use any other reading test or to devise one of its own. The offer was declined. All that the public could discern about the district, therefore, was

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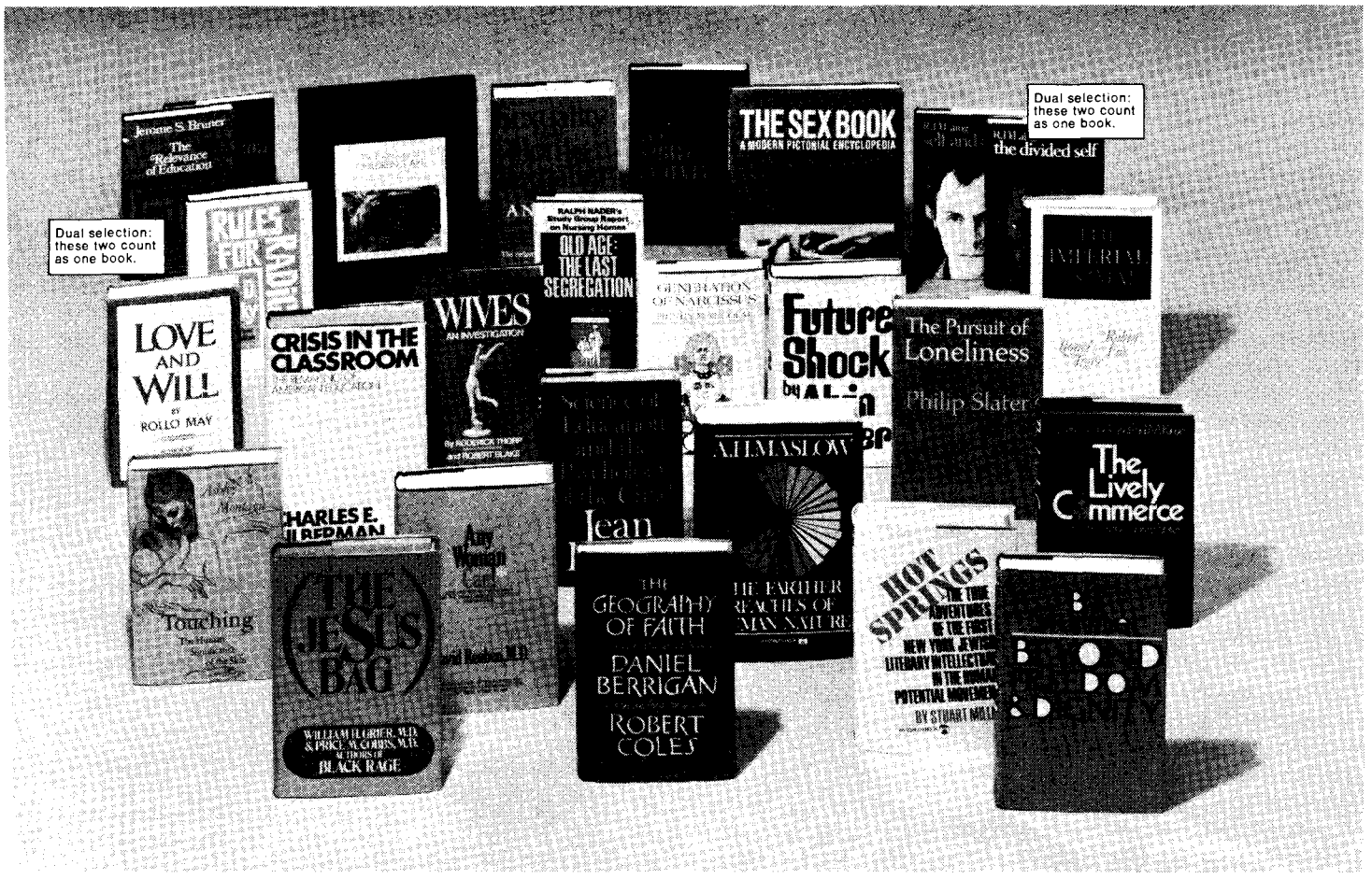

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what the district disseminated about itself, without any means of outside evaluation.

The day came at last, however, when the eight schools which had made up Ocean Hill-Brownsville submitted to the same reading tests as the rest of the city's schools. This did not occur until the spring of 1971, less than a year after the governing board and the district had been dissolved. Standardized tests (the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Tests) were administered at that time throughout the city, in accordance with a section of the 1969 decentralization law. Those schools which ranked below the 45th percentile of citywide reading scores on these tests were permitted to recruit teachers outside the usual bureaucratic process.

By the test of reading scores, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Demonstration District was a failure. Every school in the district reported poor reading scores—as compared with other schools in the city, with other schools in the borough of Brooklyn, and even with other ghetto schools generally. The highest-scoring school in the district, an elementary school, had only 24.5 per cent of its pupils reading on or above grade level. Junior High School 271 ranked as the next-to-lowest school in Brooklyn, with only 5.5 per cent of its students reading on or above grade level.

THE results of the 1971 tests were lower even than those of the tests given to the same schools in 1967, before the experiment was initiated. In 1967, for instance, seventh-graders at JHS 271 scored 5.4 (five grades and four months, more than two years behind reading level); the normal reading score for the seventh grade would have been 7.7, seven grades and seven months. In 1971, the seventh grade at this same school scored 4.7 on two separate tests, dropping a full three years behind what is considered a normal reading level for that grade. Nor was the seventh grade an aberration: the eighth grade at JHS 271 scored *more* than three years behind, recording a 5.5 and 5.4 on two different tests in 1971. No school in the former Ocean Hill-Brownsville district recorded a higher score in 1971 than it had in 1967.

Besides failing to show any improvement in reading, Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools had a serious attendance problem. The pupil absentee rate throughout the city is normally 10 per cent. Ocean Hill's absentee rate during 1968-69 was far higher. Contrary to Rhody McCoy's statement that during the teachers' strike, "our 9,000 children really started learning," about half of the district's enrollment was not even in school at that time. The district's own figures, as filed with the Institute for Community Studies at Queens College, show an opening-day enrollment of 8,534. The attendance on September 19, during the second strike, was reported to be 5,293; on November 18, during the third and longest strike, attendance was 4,439. By the district's own accounting, then, close to 50 per cent of its students were out of school; state observers believe that the true figure was closer to 70 per cent. After the strike, there continued to be an unusually high absentee rate; the district reported an attendance of 6,780 on January 23, 1969, and of 6,483 on February 6.

The district had 580 professional staff members, making a ratio of one professional to every eight-to-ten pupils. With such a favorable ratio, with the numerous paraprofessionals also on staff, with an unusual concentration of academic and foundation support, with a broad array of innovative materials and expensive educational "hardware," the educational program might have been expected to produce results. Yet there is no evidence that anything was accomplished by the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Demonstration District, in terms of teaching children to read.

SCHOOLS exist, in the first instance, to provide basic literacy. Schools which cannot teach reading and writing probably cannot teach anything else, certainly not humane values. It may be that standardized achievement tests elicit the "wrong" kind of learning, whatever that means, yet parents generally expect the schools to deliver literacy before embarking on innovative paths. This point, ultimately, is one of the crowning ironies of community control. Though community control has been advanced by educational radicals as a means of freeing the schools from bureaucratic conservatism and conventional thinking, in fact, elected parent-community boards tend to be more conservative, more middle class, and more bound to traditional approaches than most professional educators. Real community pressure, especially in poor and working-class areas, is in the direction of making sure that children are being equipped for entry into the middle class. This explains why Rhody McCoy felt compelled to demonstrate conventional achievement to Ocean Hill-Brownsville parents with impressive-sounding figures. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board may have appeared radical and innovative to the outside world, but in fact it was desperately trying any and all means to achieve the traditional goals of higher reading scores and discipline in the halls. The community wanted educational results. At the very least, parents wanted assurance that their children were learning to read and write at grade level.

IT STILL remains true, in New York City as elsewhere, that schools with middle-class children —whether white or black—record higher achievement scores—than schools with lower-class children, no matter who controls the schools. And it is equally true that the problems of poverty—hunger, family instability, sickness, unemployment, and despair—cannot be solved by the schools alone. No amount of administrative experimentation seems to be able to change these facts. Of Ocean Hill-Brownsville it cannot be said that anyone gained educationally from the experiment in community control. On the contrary, after all the publicity and conflict, after all the bold rhetoric and revolutionary expectations, after all the money spent, jobs allocated, new machinery and programs introduced, the children of the district cannot read as well today as they did five years ago.

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Letter from Tel Aviv

Amos Elon

THE rains came late this year. Now, early in December, autumn abruptly drops and the air is pregnant with uncertainties, political and otherwise. Seasonal change in Israel occurs almost overnight with a dramatic suddenness that is not untypical of things generally in this part of the world. In the interior of the country, a few days of rain wash the gray summer dust off stony hills, and soon they will be buried under blankets of light green dotted with yellows and pinks. Along the coastal plains the dry and parched fields melt into reddish mud. In downtown Tel Aviv, heavy traffic jams develop because of the sudden flooding of a main intersection. Between showers there are long spells of warm sunshine. In Israel, late fall and early winter are the best of seasons.

The light, in summer mercilessly harsh, seethingly white and blinding, is soft and translucent now, gently caressing the anthropomorphic features of the landscape, hanging over rooftops and freshly-sown fields like a tent of spun silk. The air, new and invigorating, is a blend of powerful tastes and smells—of rain, sand, and fruit-bearing citrus trees. The blend is probably unique to Israel: it envelops you like a fog the moment you step off the plane at Lod, filling your sterilized lungs with the peculiar scent of sandy grass and damp acidity. Even in Tel Aviv and Haifa, where pollution last summer was said nearly to equal that of Los Angeles, the air is clean now. November in Israel is as glorious as a European April.

A few Israeli poets and songwriters may still bemoan the "death of summer" or weep iambically over the "melancholy sadness" of fall. But I suspect that those who do so are foreign-born, or at least have imported their imagery unthinkingly from the radically different climate of Central or Eastern Europe. The late Nathan Alterman is a good case in point. A native of Eastern Europe, Alterman moved to Israel in the early 1930's, and subsequently became the finest lyricist in modern Hebrew poetry. Could he have thought of Israel when, in one of his best-known poems, he sadly decried the "bitter bitterness of fall"? Alterman likened the lengthening nights of autumn to the "death of a kingdom." But in Israel, autumn really symbolizes not death but life: new flowers, not the wilting of the old; fresh greens, reds, and yellows, not browns passing into ashen gray. Most local trees are evergreen, not deciduous as in Northern Europe or America. Autumn renews the green foliage which was badly scorched in the heat of summer. Autumn in Israel is neither bitter nor sad: it is sweet. It is a time for lovers and a renewal of hopes.

It is also a time for trouble. The weary waiting for the heat to end taxes the nerves tremendously. Does it also, like spring, inflame the passions? "The nights are lengthening," A. B. Yehoshua wrote of Israel's autumn fever in "Facing the Forests," a hauntingly beautiful short story published a few years ago. "Raindrops and desert *hamsin* in utter confusion. Storms spawned in secret. Mute lightning on the horizon. The *Last Day* cometh."

* * *

DOES it, now? Israel maintains its normal facade of cheerful self-assurance. The cease-fire, although threatened by fiery speechmaking in Cairo, still holds. For many Israelis this has still been the autumn of their finest hopes. There has been no war, nor has there been withdrawal to borders any less secure or any closer to Israel's main centers of population. The morning papers, as usual, are full of dire predictions, but they no longer carry the black-rimmed portrait gallery of fallen nineteen-year-olds which in the spring and summer of 1970 occupied the front pages almost daily.

And yet, one cannot help feeling that the calm cannot continue much longer. The uncertainties accompanying the worsening diplomatic crises have come to seem more ominous each day. The present Egypt-Israel cease-fire agreement has now lasted some eighteen months. When it first went into effect in 1970, General Moshe Dayan announced on television that Israel was entering a long "corridor to peace." For the general, with his strong tendency, inbred by a lifetime of warfare, to anticipate a constant increase in bloodshed, in sweat and tears, this was a rare and perhaps even rash lapse into optimism.

At the time, however, there seemed ample grounds for optimism. Egypt had clearly lost the war of attrition. It had failed to undermine either the social fabric or the economy of Israel. By most indications Cairo was clearly weary of the war and was looking for a way out. Israel, on the other hand, was newly relieved of a cumbersome national coalition government in which hardliners and moderates had cancelled each other out. In subscribing to the American "peace initiative," the government was taking a new and more flexible position, dissolving its former adherence to the old policy of "full and complete peace" or of "direct talks" as a precondition to withdrawal. For a while it did indeed seem that the ice might somehow be broken. The possibility loomed of an interim agreement which would include a partial withdrawal by Israeli forces to a point some thirty or forty miles behind the present Bar Lev line. In return the Suez Canal would be opened to international shipping. The cease-fire would continue and so would the talks, whether indirect or direct. The temptation of such an interim agreement seemed for a time almost irresistible. Clearly, no side was at the moment capable of achieving all it wanted; perhaps each could be made to accept something less.

Israel wanted full peace; this she

AMOS ELON, *the noted Israeli journalist, is the author of, most recently,* The Israelis: Founders and Sons *(Holt).*

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could not get, under the circumstances. Egypt wanted total Israeli withdrawal; this *she* could not get. Total withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula might have been negotiable in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 war; indeed it was offered by Israel in September 1967 in return for peace with Egypt. But much had happened since: direct conflict between the two sides was unremitting throughout 1969-70, and Soviet involvement in the area increased dramatically. Total withdrawal may perhaps again become a negotiable issue, but certainly not in the immediate future. In the meantime, it was argued, since neither side could attain its maximalist aims, and both were equally weary of war, surely the sanest, most plausible course would be a partial solution satisfactory to both. It might be possible, for example, to separate the belligerents by an international peace-keeping force stationed in the evacuated areas, and by allowing peaceful shipping in a reopened Suez Canal.

Once such a first step were taken, furthermore, both sides might be tempted to reduce defense expenditures somewhat and turn to domestic reforms, long overdue in Egypt as well as in Israel. More importantly, perhaps, there might begin on both sides the kind of psychological, or ideological, disarmament which must be a precondition to any lasting settlement. Such psychological disarmament could result in a modification of some of the hard political and strategic principles now held to with uncompromising tenacity by both Israel and Egypt. Given two or three years, both sides might well appear much less rigid than they do today—Egypt less insistent in its demand for "total" Israeli withdrawal, Israel more amenable to taking greater risks in the interests of peace. The entire Israeli notion of "secure" borders, which at the moment is so rigid that no self-respecting Arab could acquiesce in it, would undoubtedly be softened in the context of a different political climate. The Egyptians might even retrieve their beloved Sharm-el-Sheikh, which in their eyes has been transformed from the uninhabited, God-forsaken spot it really is into a glowing national symbol, a kind of Middle Eastern Alsace-Lorraine.

Such were the hopes attached to the idea of an interim settlement, especially by those in Israel who were suspicious of utopian shortcuts to peace. It all seemed very reasonable, logical, and sane. And yet it now appears likely that nothing will come of it. The Egypt-Israel conflict, inextricably entangled as it is in the web of regional politics and international power rivalries—to say nothing of the tremendous load of past traumas, fears, and passions—will in all probability continue in a series of increasingly brutal and bloody clashes. The corridor that General Dayan spoke of so hopefully in 1970 is long indeed, and it does not seem to be leading to peace.

* * *

WHOSE fault is it? In future years it may well come to seem that the Egyptians, by failing to recognize the consequences of their 1967 defeat, by refusing direct talks and formal peace, made another war inevitable even if they did not explicitly want it. If President Sadat were really interested in a "peaceful solution" in 1971 as he claimed, his threats of all-out war if Israel refused his terms were not likely to enhance Israel's willingness to take grave military risks for a mere scrap of paper. In return for total Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, Sadat vaguely promised to recognize Israel's "right to exist." In view of past events and the Egyptian penchant for doubletalk, this was not something most Israelis were willing to pay so high a price for, especially since it entailed the strong possibility that Soviet missiles would be moved from distant Suez to within fifty miles of Israel's main population centers. The strategic depth offered by the present lines seems more secure to Israelis than a dubious peace coupled with withdrawal. Hence the universal support within Israel for Mrs. Meir's present policies, even among doves and intellectuals who were sharply critical of her rigidity only two years ago.

On the other hand, Israel may come to appear blameworthy as well for not having seized the opportunity to initiate a process of gradual reconciliation. A clearer Israeli commitment to total withdrawal in the event of full peace might have relaxed Egypt's suspicions that an interim agreement on the Suez would only freeze the present situation and maintain Israel's occupation of Sinai indefinitely. Israel may altogether come to be blamed for its blind and rigid subscription to the principle of "secure borders," that shibboleth of 19th-century politics which the English historian Herbert Butterfield aptly described as the greatest and most consistent fallacy of the past hundred years. As he put it, a border was never really "secure" unless it upset the balance to so great a degree that the next war became inevitable.

* * *

THE Israeli press, never noted for its optimism, has recently been given to making gloomier predictions than usual: one worrying headline follows another. The new atmosphere of war-threats is not rendered less macabre by the obvious verve and *joie de vivre* which, despite growing internal rifts, still mark the Israeli public scene, at least on the surface. If, indeed, we are sitting on a powder keg, most of us are having a ball waiting for it to go off. Despite a series of public scandals involving high officials and their protegés, the country vibrates with gusto; despite an alleged slowdown in the economy, consumption this autumn reached an all-time high. The greatest tourist boom in Israel's history continues unabated. In October and early November it seemed, in fact, that with each new threat by an Egyptian leader it became harder to get a hotel room in Tev Aviv or a seat on one of El Al's unbearably crowded planes.

In Tel Aviv scarcely a day goes by without some fancy boutique or refurbished candlelit restaurant opening for business. Along the sea front, Hayarkon Street is undergoing a face-lifting, with half-a-dozen new hotels under construction; the crumbling facades of many old houses on this street are being renovated at considerable cost. Tel Aviv, never famous for neatness, seems somehow tidier and cleaner this fall than ever before. In the

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crystalline clarity of the autumn light, the softer hues of gray and blue play over the city's concrete, whitewashed skyline. Viewed from the windy beach esplanade, repainted last summer in vibrant pop colors, the city looks like a gaping mouth, open to the sea and the billows of cloud floating in the lowering sky. On sunny days one can still see swimmers braving the surf, especially Scandinavian tourists who find the weather pleasantly hot, and dozens of multicolored sailboats dot the water. The main streets overflow with traffic; pedestrians shoulder each other in the narrow space between sidewalk cafés and traffic lanes. At 3 A.M. in the morning, in the bright lights of Dizengoff Road where crowds of youngsters still bustle and shout, the war seems distant and remote.

* * *

TRAFFIC jams are of unprecedented magnitude and frequency. What with taxes and import duty, the cheapest, stripped-down Volkswagen costs almost $5,000, but never have so many Israelis owned cars. Never have people in general paid such high taxes (80 per cent income tax on all income over $500 monthly, 250 per cent purchase tax on imported items) and still had so much money to spend. Never have there been so many glittering and expensive little sports cars, driven by sun-tanned youths in colorful see-through blouses who look as if they have just stepped out of the pages of a hunting or fishing magazine. Sunny, mild autumn days; long straight hair fluttering in the wind; gay laughter. The air is thick with a kind of voluptuous sensuality, hedonistic, titillating, delectable, strangely ephemeral.

By and large, of course, Tel Aviv remains as shabby as ever: walls peeling, dirty sidewalks, and the narrow passages between houses blocked by old garbage. Yet the city has never been so colorful—even picturesque—as it appears this autumn. This new picturesqueness is largely one-dimensional, like a vibrant color poster for a new ice cream. It is supremely modern in its evanescence and superficiality. Facades of shiny, thin plastic have popped up everywhere along the main streets of town, glittering in a wealth of psychedelic colors. Even the Tel Aviv city government, in many ways still a citadel of stodgy conservative Laborites in coalition with bearded representatives of the Orthodox religious bloc, is engaged in a moving effort to get with it. The local engineering department has touched up the main thoroughfares with vast patches of brilliant color, in wild concentric designs.

The new facades frequently serve to cover up the decay and neglect which for the past two or three decades have been the hallmark of Tel Aviv, a prematurely aged city urgently in need of thorough urban renewal. The main streets are lined with new snack bars and ice cream or pastry parlors which remain crowded until the early hours of the morning. It is a predominantly young crowd. Not a few are in uniform. On Dizengoff Road a bored middle-aged civil-defense warden in a green beret and crumpled old khaki uniform rubs shoulders with giggling teen-aged girls wearing ultra-minis or tiny hot pants, or with slightly older girl-soldiers, slender, tanned, all legs, all khaki, all arms. Youth, with all its noise and unbridled energy, remains the dominant tone of a city that now boasts some of the finest amenities of a middle-class bourgeoisie.

In downtown Tel Aviv one sees relatively more young people now than, I suppose, in most cities of Europe or America. The population of Tel Aviv proper is barely 350,000, but the downtown section is the heart of a much larger metropolitan area which now embraces six or seven adjacent cities with a total population of over a million. Especially at night the brilliantly lit entertainment centers of North Tel Aviv operate as a veritable magnet to attract vast crowds of restless sixteen- to thirty-five-year-olds from an area over thirty miles in radius.

Hayarkon Street is the main entertainment center. Here traffic is blocked almost nightly by crowds of noisy young people wandering from bar to bar, from discothèque to discothèque. Further down the road, a new sea esplanade, long under construction and finally recently opened to traffic, leads into the restored medieval quarter of Old Jaffa. Here, on the Quai of the Second Aliyah (it commemorates the disembarkation here in 1906 of David Ben-Gurion and his colleagues) are seafood restaurants and steak joints and narrow passageways leading up to artists' galleries. This area too remains alive and bustling until the early hours. There is a raucous Greek *bouzouki* joint, Ariana, on the corner of the Quai, where some of the best Greek music east of Piraeus can be heard nightly.

It was at this very spot, right outside Ariana, where Zalman David Levontin, the very first pioneer of the new Lovers of Zion, disembarked in 1882, fresh from the Russian pogroms, and immediately wrote back that there were excellent prospects for Jewish settlers in the blessed land of their forefathers. A few weeks later Levontin founded the first Jewish colony, Rishon Le-Zion ("The first to Zion . . . that bringeth good tidings to Jerusalem"—Isaiah 41:27). In the flush of more recent events, wars, achievements, and disasters, one sometimes forgets how long ago it all started, and how long, by our own shaky standards of stability it has already lasted.

* * *

IT WAS said long ago of Tel Aviv, by one of the poets who settled here in the late 1920's when it was still a small town of rickety houses and wooden or tin shacks, that it was somehow "born as a metropolis." As in Jerusalem and in the rest of the country, there is more construction going on today in Tel Aviv than ever before. Vast construction cranes on caterpillars stalk over the urban landscape like Martians in an H. G. Wells novel. In the south of the city, a number of new industrial centers sprout in a bleak landscape of former slums, their residents having been moved earlier this year into new residential sections further to the east. In the fashionable north, on Weizmann Street, foundations are being laid for what is advertised as "Tel Aviv's No. 1 Address of Prestige"—two-bedroom apartments will start at 180,000 Israeli pounds ($60,000), penthouses will cost

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300,000 pounds ($100,000); the buildings are being constructed by, of all people, the housing arm of the Federation of Labor. Everywhere, one sees huge signs advertising "Luxury Flats," or "Dream Apartments," many with central air-conditioning and private garages. How anyone but a rich immigrant from the United States or Europe can afford such a flat, with taxes being what they are, is anybody's guess.

Many of the new apartment houses stand atop a forest of concrete pillars; almost the entire ground area is reserved for parking. Just as our lives these days hang by threads, so our houses stand precariously on stilts. The early Zionists meant to reverse the village-to-city migration patterns then common among Jews. Jews were supposed to return to the soil as farmers. Israel's puritan fathers were passionately anti-urban. Yet today we are a predominantly urban nation and the new Tel Aviv is its distinct symbol. Ben-Gurion once referred bitterly to Tel Aviv as another "Nineveh." I heard a different version the other day from a young conscript who is doing his military service with an artillery unit on the Suez Canal. "Tel Aviv may be awful," he said, "but it is really, after all, the *si hakeff* (the peak of fun)."

It has been said that cities, like poems, compress a great deal into a narrow space and then add music. This autumn Tel Aviv struck up a very special tune—loud, a bit raucous to the ear, a bit vulgar, very faithful in my opinion to the present Israeli temper, with a peculiar warmth and a built-in shock effect, cheerfulness mixed with a note of bitter irony. A widespread current mood is well expressed by a character in a recently-staged play by Yoram Kaniuk. The drama concerns the exploits of "Nili," a group of British-Jewish spies that operated in the Jewish colonies during World War I in flagrant defiance of the then Zionist Establishment. It centers upon a particularly traumatic event in the lives of the first native-born sons of settlers, and at one point the hero remarks to his girl friend, "When we were born we signed a lot of I.O.U.'s. We did not know."

Ministering to Britain

Rudolf Klein

THERE are two basic stereotypes of politicians, with a great many variations on each. The first is what might be called the "politician-as-conspirator" stereotype: this sees politicians as pursuing deviously their own long-term ends, wire-pullers and intriguers ruthlessly bending events and manipulating people to their own purposes. The second is the "politician-as-weathervane" stereotype: this sees politicians as men without principles, adjusting their policies to events, changing even their public personae to make them more acceptable to the voters, ready to abandon any long-term aims they may happen to have in order to maintain themselves in office. In the context of the United States, Lyndon Johnson would probably fit the first stereotype and Richard Nixon the second. In the British context, Harold Macmillan emphatically fits the first while Harold Wilson represents the second.

The recent publication of the fourth volume of Macmillan's "memoirs"* and of Wilson's "personal record" of his premiership† provides a good opportunity to examine how well such popular ideas about politicians, their style and motives, stand up. For certainly, to approach either of these two volumes with any hope of *historical* illumination would be to insure disappointment. Both books are examples of verbal inflation: too many words chasing too few goods. There are precious few "revelations." There is nothing which will cause us to look at past events in a new light. There is, instead, a self-indulgent torrent of self-quotations from old speeches and a disregard of the reader's boredom threshold. As historical contributions these volumes provide footnotes for the specialists; as literary efforts they are non-events.

The two volumes do have a certain fascination as involuntary self-revelations: the psychoanalyst's case notes which provide new insights into the nature of politicians and, indeed, into the nature of the British political system. Macmillan, long since retired from active politics, is writing for posterity; Wilson, still active as the leader of the Labour party, is addressing the voters at the next general election. Macmillan's world is largely peopled by the dead: John Foster Dulles, Khrushchev, Adenauer; Wilson's world is that of those with whom he has to live, negotiate, and bargain.

As for our two basic images of politicians, Macmillan, as I noted above, seems type-cast as the devious conspirator-politician. When his book begins he is Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Eden still Prime Minister. When it ends Macmillan has been Prime Minister for more than two years, having successfully held together the Tory party in its retreat from Suez although he was among the most fervent and unrepentant advocates of this adventure in the first place. Chosen as leader of the Conservatives precisely because he appeared to be a traditional tough Tory—an anti-appeasement man in the 30's in contrast to his rival for the leadership, the elusive R. A. Butler—he completed the liquidation of the British Empire which had been started by Attlee's postwar Labour government. In this volume the process is only beginning but the trend is already clear, as Macmillan prepares to pull out of Cyprus and sheds the leading Tory diehard, Lord Salisbury, from his Cabinet. On the knowledge of Macmillan's past record as an enthusiastic European (the previous volume) and his future as an applicant for entry into the Economic Community (the next vol-

RUDOLF KLEIN, *here making his first appearance in these pages, is a Research Associate at London University. Mr. Klein has written extensively on political matters in the British press.*

**Riding the Storm: 1956-1959,* Harper & Row, 786 pp., $15.00.

†A Personal Record: The Labour Government 1964-1970, Atlantic-Little, Brown, 836 pp., $15.00.

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ume, presumably), it seems reasonable to conclude that all his policies formed part of a grand design, and that when he was acting the traditional Tory statesman it was a charade carried out for the benefit of his party, a cynical exercise in deception calculated to give him greater freedom of maneuver.

This sort of explanation, though it is generally accepted and fits in well with the stereotype, does not to my mind survive a reading of the Macmillan memoirs. What really destroys the stereotype, as applied to Macmillan at any rate, are the unconscious revelations. These suggest that, while he was a ruthless politician and shrewd tactician, there was also a romantic side to his character, attracted by the chance to play the historical roles of British statesmanship. If he acted out what now appear to be political charades—notably the attempts to play the middleman between Washington and Moscow—it was because he enjoyed doing so and because he was able to suspend any disbelief about their efficacy (and, to be fair, they may well have had some marginal value).

In other words, Macmillan's memoirs underline that being a politician means playing what is often an inherited role—and that it is virtually impossible to act it out successfully in a spirit of cynicism; self-deception comes before the deception of others. Macmillan, in those days of reflected if ebbing Churchillian glory, behaved in the way a British Prime Minister was still expected to behave; this, rather than conscious play-acting, is the simplest and most convincing explanation.

BUT if Macmillan was a traditional romantic in his postures, he was also realistic enough to recognize a brick wall when he met it face to face. It was the romantic in him which made him an advocate of the Suez adventure to the point where he ignored the warning signals from Eisenhower and Dulles. (Interestingly enough, even now Macmillan considers that it was United States opposition which caused the failure of the expedition, rather than the unrealistic nature of his hope of being able to install a friendly, pro-Western regime in Egypt.) But it was the realist in him which caused him to liquidate the policy which had led to disaster. In many ways, this volume suggests that Macmillan was emotionally on the side of those diehard Tories who throughout the 50's bitterly fought the disengagement from imperial grandeur; intellectually, though, he knew that the policy did not make sense. It was this quality of imaginative sympathy, rather like a novelist thinking himself into the mind of one of his characters, which made him so successful a politician for so long, not the cynicism and calculation of the stereotype. Indeed, the Macmillan memoirs, despite their ponderous orotundity of style, suggest that one of the key qualifications of a successful politician is precisely a quickness of intuition, a readiness to imagine the hitherto unimaginable—for example, to consider, as Macmillan did when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer but as Wilson refused to do when he became Prime Minister, devaluing or even floating the pound.

WILSON conveniently provides a counterpoint to Macmillan. Although he reputedly modeled himself on the Tory master-tactician, as he saw him, Wilson seems much nearer to the "politician-as-weathervane" stereotype: a model of the politician who, lacking convictions of his own, is prepared to trim his sail to whatever wind happens to be prevailing, concerned only to keep himself in office. The record of the Labour government from 1964 to 1970—the subject of his book—is the story of policies abandoned and reversed: of the long struggle to defend the pound which ends in devaluation, of the determined attempt to maintain Britain's East of Suez position which ends in withdrawal, of the dream to keep on playing a world role which ends in the application to join the European Community. While Macmillan appeared to be leading his party, Wilson seemed to be led only by events.

This view of Wilson is certainly more convincing than the picture of him—widely accepted in 1964 but destroyed by his actual performance in office—as the archetypal political tactician: unlikable perhaps and certainly not to be compared to Hugh Gaitskell with his moral commitment to policies, but to be admired, if only reluctantly, for his adroitness and dedication to survival. In the event, Wilson turned out to be not Mephistopheles but Micawber, not so much the unscrupulous schemer as the euphoric optimist. Wilson's record (the "memoirs" for the period are presumably reserved for a later date) does, on the whole, fit the weathervane stereotype reasonably well—with one very important reservation, however. The stereotype assumes that politicians who act without principles necessarily have none; the Wilson volume suggests that an apparently shiftless drift from expedient to expedient is perfectly compatible with what seems to be a genuine, even a deep-rooted, attachment to principles.

Looking at the events chronicled by Wilson himself, one gets the impression more of excessive stubbornness than of excessive suppleness. The reversals of the Labour government's policies tended to be violent precisely because Wilson was reluctant to modify or abandon them until left no option by events. Wilson was weak precisely where Macmillan was strong: the apparently down-to-earth, commonsensical, numerate Labour politician—with his elaborately constructed public facade as the first British Prime Minister with his feet firmly in the age of technology (this was before technology got a bad name for itself)—turns out, on inspection, to have had a less firm grasp of reality than the apparently anachronistic Tory leader whose manners and style often seemed to be a deliberately theatrical parody of the Edwardian.

Again, the crucial element in Wilson's performance as Prime Minister seems to have been his own private vision of himself in this role. Macmillan, as I have argued, saw himself still in the Churchillian mold—which is why he carried so much conviction even while he was reversing the historic policies which he had inherited together with his role. Wilson, I suspect after reading his book, was concerned primarily to establish himself as a moral figure:

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the man of principle, the inheritor of the Labour tradition based on an ideology of doing good. It was a role which perhaps he pursued with all the more energy because of its being suspect in the first place; it was as though he were, if only unconsciously, trying to live down his reputation as the man who had refused to stand up and be counted while Hugh Gaitskell successfully fought and fought again to prevent the Labour party from going neutralist. His career as Prime Minister suggests that no politician is more stubbornly attached to his principles than the one who is publicly suspected of having too few.

This sort of psychological overcompensation mechanism helps to explain a lot about Wilson, and perhaps also about other politicians. For example in this book Wilson tries to present his commitment to defend the parity of the pound as a practical, not a moral, decision; this is not convincing to anyone who remembers the emotion with which he used to denounce those of us who dared to use the word devaluation in print at a time when a change in the parity would have saved years of deflation, stagnation, and rising unemployment. Precisely because of this moral, emotional investment in the pound as a symbol of financial integrity and virtue, devaluation happened at the worst possible moment—when it was forced on Wilson by events, and there was no alternative. In all this, Wilson certainly showed himself a man of high principle who put country before party in his own view of things: after all, his policy probably cost Labour the 1970 election. Unfortunately he also showed himself a disastrous Prime Minister because—unlike Macmillan—he proved to be an insensitive politician who did not recognize the signals warning him to change direction.

A recurring theme throughout his volume is the emphasis on the unexpected event which somehow robs Wilson of the credit which his intentions ought to have won him. Domestically there is the stress on the various strikes which weakened the pound and therefore helped to defeat Wilson's economic strategy; in Britain, at any rate, this is rather like complaining that the climate prevents tropical fruit from being grown. Abroad, there is the lament that he was betrayed by the hawks in the Johnson administration in February 1967 when on the point of successfully negotiating a formula with Kosygin in London which would have allowed the start of negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam (though no recognition, despite subsequent events, that getting negotiations going is a pretty meaningless and futile exercise while there is not a shadow of agreement as to the possible outlines of a settlement).

So, ONCE AGAIN, a stereotype needs revision. Like the politician as devious conspirator, so the politician as weathervane is not a psychologically convincing type. It lacks shade and subtlety. For to think in terms of such crude caricatures—implicit in many current attitudes toward politicians which tend to range from tired cynicism to brutal contempt—is to forget that even politicians have mirrors. It may be the mirror of their own personal code, in which they have been brought up. It may be the mirror of their own parties or friends. It may be the mirror of the media, press, and television. Whatever it is—and whether one tries to explain it in terms of reference groups or role playing, as the psychologists and sociologists might—the very distortions and inaccuracies of political memoirs and records are a tribute to its existence. The way in which politicians try to justify their actions is significant precisely because it reveals what their own ideals are—an attempt to fit events into the patterns of what they would have liked to do instead of what they actually did. Thus the ideal Prime Minister of the Tory Macmillan—implicit in his account of his own actions—is a very different sort of political animal from the ideal Prime Minister of the Labour Wilson.

The Wilson self-portrayal is a reminder that political parties of the Left tend to be parties of morality: that some of the Labour party's roots, for example, go back to the Levellers and other Puritan sects of the 17th century. As a result, lurking invisibly but omnipresently in the book is the specter of the ideal Labour leader—something of a Calvinistic Old Testament character, strong on good works, hard on moral lapses, intolerant of slackness. Hence perhaps the curiously defensive character of *A Personal Record*, the constant emphasis on how hard Wilson tried and worked, the endlessly boring chronicles of ceaseless activity. This need for self-justification may, of course, simply reflect the fact that the book was written in the wake of an election defeat, or some personal psychological quirk peculiar to Wilson. I suspect, though, that it is also indicative of the attitude of left-wing parties toward their leaders, who are made to feel perpetually on trial and assumed to be corrupt unless they prove the contrary by their actions (leading logically to the Chinese habit of public self-confession).

Right-wing parties, on the other hand, at least of the moderate, non-ideological sort represented by the British Tories, expect their leaders to be successful rather than morally spotless, if Macmillan's memoirs are anything to go by. The memoirs suggest a relaxed sense of superiority, as well they might given Macmillan's astonishing political achievement in pulling together a dispirited and disunited party after Suez and leading it to a triumphant election victory in 1959. Unlike Wilson, he does not fight a retrospective running battle with his newspaper critics, nor does he conduct long inquests on his own failures in order to secure a verdict of "not guilty." There is a deliberate if deceptive air of patrician nonchalance about the writing. It is deceptive in a double sense, because Macmillan is no patrician (though he married into the dukeries) and because in practice he was anything but nonchalant in his style of running his government. For instance, he was far more ruthless in getting rid of ministers than Wilson; those who disagreed with his policies, as his memoirs show, went down the political oubliette.

THESE books do more, however, than illuminate the differences between the British political parties and the personalities of their au-

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thors. They are also revealing about the problems involved in exercising political power. This is particularly true of Wilson's book. It is interesting in this respect precisely because of its stylistic ingenuousness. Unlike Macmillan, who chops up his material into chapters each of which deals with a specific issue, Wilson's account of his premiership is strictly chronological—day by day, hour by hour. As a result, it gives a vivid sense of a political leader besieged by events, with important international occurrences taking their place in the same queue as the small change of party political disputes. And although this sort of timetable makes the book dreary reading it also makes it one of the best case-studies ever written of the pathology of power, of the incredible physical and psychological pressures which events can impose on politicians, and of the consequent need for an effective filtering system to distinguish the key messages coming in from mere background noise. (This, in turn, points to the difficult question of who should control the filtering process—and the importance of those chosen by the political executive to select the key messsages on his behalf.)

Given Wilson's obsessive memory, the omissions from his book are all the more interesting. They suggest that for a politician, the capacity to forget may be almost as important as the ability to remember: that if he cannot reinterpret events to his own satisfaction, he must diminish their importance to the vanishing point. The politician cannot afford to have the pea of intellectual self-doubt under his mattress. Characteristically Wilson dismisses Britain's once famous National Plan in a brief half-page; no one reading this book would realize that the Plan was the centerpiece of the Wilson government's economic strategy—an attempt to emulate French-style planning which, it was hoped and promised, would introduce an era of smoothly accelerating economic expansion.

Equally these books suggest that politicians develop another psychological defense strategy: this is to narrow their interests (always assuming, of course, that they are not successful politicians precisely because of a monomaniacal interest in politics). The years covered by the two memoirs were an exceptionally interesting period in Britain's history, and not just because the country was trying to find a new international role, indeed almost a new national identity. Behind the crises of imperial disengagement, behind the crises of economic readjustment—faithfully recorded by the two ex-Prime Ministers—the country was undergoing rapid social and cultural changes. While politically the Macmillan-Wilson generations were still in power, culturally a much younger generation was taking over. In turn, there was a shift in public morality reflected in changes in public policy. Of this, there is hardly any hint in these memoirs. Macmillan openly shrinks from the subject, while Wilson simply omits any mention of what was after all one of the great achievements presided over by his government. Between 1964 and 1970, homosexual conduct between consenting adults in private was legalized, the divorce laws were liberalized, and publicly-regulated abortion was introduced. So anxious throughout his book to salvage credit even from disaster, Wilson refuses to take it in this instance. Is it that he thinks there are no votes to be gained from this kind of issue? Or is it because he himself is just not concerned, or even hostile?

Conceivably the stylistic coarseness of these two books—the reach-me-down 19th-century style of Macmillan and the computer prose of Wilson—reflects a coarsening of the perceptions in a more general way. The intriguing question is whether this kind of coarsening is the occupational hazard of politicians, or whether there is some process of natural selection whereby only those capable of taking a one-eyed view of life come to the top. Macmillan's story suggests the first explanation: enough hints of a once-sensitive intellectual come through to suggest that he was at least partly stunted by his environment. Wilson's book suggests the latter explanation: of a man who in politics has found his natural, inescapable vocation.

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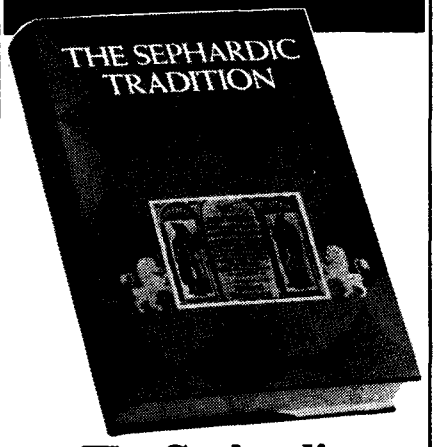

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Books in Review

Life in the Cage

BEYOND FREEDOM AND DIGNITY. By B. F. SKINNER. *Knopf. 225 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by HAROLD KAPLAN

IT IS now familiar in the teaching and publishing world to be confronted by aroused and militant scientists who wish to turn their science to the uses of social reform. Value neutrality was the old established principle which trained scientists to make the strongest distinctions between theory and practice, the possible and the desirable. Since Hiroshima, the anomaly of such distinctions has troubled scientists in every field, and the torment of conscience increased triplefold with the civil-rights decade, the Vietnam war, and the ecology crusade. The practical world has gone along with this trend. Today, 19th-century Marxist "science" has renewed respectability as a political weapon. And it is instructive to remember that in liberal America the strongest impetus for the Supreme Court civil-rights decision came from pleaders before the Court who represented the views of psychology and sociology on the effects of segregation.

Speaking for an aggressive sect of social scientists, B. F. Skinner, for long the most famous of behaviorist psychologists, has written the culminating book of his career, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, which can be interpreted as nothing less than a bid for power by a new leader class, called, in his words, the "technologists of behavior." The book therefore rightly commands the wide attention it has received. A cover story in *Time* magazine is a familiar accolade the American Establishment offers to the latest novelties of the *Zeitgeist*, ripples before the wave of the future. But this is no new fashion, nor mere revolutionary chic. The practices of American industry and advertising, of the communications media, and of high-pressure millionaire politics have long conducted the experiments in "operant conditioning" which Skinner recommends for wholesale use. What is new here reflects a change in the basic predispositions of intellectual leaders in the universities, traditionally bastions in the defense of democratic principles in our society.

The primary purpose of Skinner's book is not to set up a model for the future so much as to eliminate the psychological obstacles in its path. He has unlimited confidence in the capacity of behavioral science to solve human problems; what he doubts is our will to use it. The chief obstacles are generated from what he calls the "literature of freedom and dignity." He is not specific, in fact he is surprisingly vague in his references to this literature, but we gather what he means easily enough. The reference could of course include the whole Western religious and literary tradition. Briefly, the troublesome postulate is the concept of individual autonomy in the ethical sphere, the responsibility and the right to choose behavior. The principle had its source not only in man's higher responsibility to God in his conscience, but also in his right to resist force from men who wished to control his behavior. The difficulty for Skinner, putting both God and primitive violence aside, is the task now of making men amenable to control, that is, conscious, sophisticated control in the modern "scientific" sense. Control, conditioning, we have always had, but it was masked. The problem now is how to pursue a direct and purified technology of control, which though peaceful and benign, is still likely to arouse men's prejudices on behalf of "freedom" and "dignity."

IN HIS book Skinner proposes that the science of behavior has an answer not only about what people do but whether what they do is good for them. What is good for people should be described, Skinner says, as the "reinforcing effects of things." This is "the province of behavioral science, which, to the extent that it is concerned with operant reinforcement, is a science of values." Ascertaining what is good for people has been made difficult in the past by the need to ask them and being dependent in some measure on their answer. But if the question is shifted from inner feeling to behavior, one needn't ask anything of people to find out what is good for them; one need only observe their behavior. Reinforcements are the contingencies which follow behavior with either gratification or its opposite, and so induce the recurrence or avoidance of behavior. "Negative reinforcements" are also called the "aversive consequences" of behavior, which can be either the effect of directed conditioning or the natural sequence of behavior which has unpleasant effects, like forgetting one's coat and catching cold. Pain, sickness, and death are the simplest terms for describing the aversive consequences of behavior, and they form the model for Skinner's effort to construct a value system, which we discover is chiefly articulate on the issue of human survival. This is a natural criterion for a scientist but it may be found by others to be a singularly barren source for an ethic and a culture.

But things are even more severe than that. Not only do we live on close terms with extinction, but paradoxically in our human environments we are like caged animals.

A culture is very much like the experimental space used in the analysis of behavior. Both are sets of contingencies of reinforce-

HAROLD KAPLAN, *who teaches at Bennington College, is the author of a book on modern fiction,* The Passive Voice. *His new book,* Democratic Humanism and American Literature, *will be published this spring by the University of Chicago Press.*

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> ment. A child is born into a culture as an organism is placed in an experimental space. Designing a culture is like designing an experiment; contingencies are arranged and effects noted. In an experiment we are interested in what happens, in designing a culture with whether it will work. This is the difference between science and technology.

Certain questions become pressing, as Skinner acknowledges. If we are in a cage, who are its keepers? Who is to arrange the contingencies and note their effects? Who is to say and what is it to say that "it works"?

There is a circularity of argument in Skinner's book which blurs a direct answer to these questions, though he does confront them. There are contingencies which induce and reward behavior. There is behavior which receives desired contingencies. The pigeon pecks a button and obtains a kernel of corn. To obtain a kernel of corn the pigeon pecks a button. We know that pigeons like corn but what do men like? This is ascertainable, Skinner says. Whatever men want is the reward for the behavior that gets them what they want. But it is not entirely a free-for-all in the forest, where contingencies are of the natural environment and there is a natural selection of behavior. Society controls most contingencies and therefore controls behavior. But who controls society?, one asks again, not entirely satisfied with Skinner's answer in his book. The main qualification for controllers, he says, is the right knowledge of contingencies and the behavior related to contingencies. That, so far, is the technology of behavior. Someone is going to have to pronounce on desirable behavior and desirable contingencies, but these must be observable *in behavior* and not judged by a poll of subjective choices. To depend on what is measurable would certainly simplify choices. What is most measurable and observable in the consequences of behavior, one is tempted to say, is the body count. And I don't think this is greatly unjust to Skinner as a description of his moral sensitivity. If we ask what is desirable, his best answer seems to be nature's answer after all, the survival of the individual and the species. The controllers do not really replace natural selection. They merely predict and enact its will.

THE moral imagination of men like Skinner, scientists who must use definite criteria in their laboratories, has been chiefly stimulated by the crisis psychology of our civilization. This gives them boldness today and very wide appeal. They are concerned about things like overpopulation, the waste of natural resources, pollution, the threat of nuclear extinction. It may be that our problem is indeed that of survival before anything else, and we need the ministrations of social doctors and engineers, but their prescriptions will not make a culture. At best they can keep it alive.

Whether we live in a democracy or an authoritarian state, as men we wish to have rapport with our "controllers." It is difficult, as those in government discover every day, to have rapport on the basis of long-run contingencies of behavior, which are too distant to be effective, as Skinner admits. In a democracy these issues may be represented in the short run by the mythologies of "freedom," "dignity," and the myth of the autonomous personality, which suggests that one might even feel ennobled, self-affirmed, in making a sacrifice for the future. What will represent the interests of long-run survival in Skinner's system of control? He has said that "Survival is the only value according to which a culture is eventually to be judged. . . ." It is the value of values, and what cannot be done in its name? One imagines such requirements as the generation of new and stronger myths, the censorship of information, even the seductions of bread and circuses. Not terror and violence, however. Skinner is explicit in rejecting the use of anything but the most pleasant reinforcements in determining behavior. But this is a sobering requirement; one recognizes that in such an order the power of the controllers must approach the absolute, far exceeding that of dictators of the past. God himself failed in the Garden of Eden, and will Skinner succeed?

Skinner might reject that imaginative contrast with indignation. But he admits the problems that Jehovah had with the troublesome Children of Israel. There are, for instance, personal reinforcements, which are directed toward the gratification of the individual. There are other conditioning reinforcements which are produced in organized society to "induce a man to behave 'for the good of others.'" As these contingencies become more powerful they overshadow the contingencies of personal reinforcement. But this involves a struggle, painful and always ambiguous in its resolution, except where control is unambiguous, that is, violent and unswerving in its determination. Now "freedom" has been a useful word, particularly in the American democratic tradition, because it involved itself in the exigencies of this struggle between the individual and society and made provision that sacrifices, if there were to be sacrifices, would not be by threat but by consent. Is there an alternative to either threat or consent other than deception, that is, the various humiliating (beyond dignity?) forms of mind and behavior control that modern political societies have developed with such great skill? And if relatively mature and intelligent use of consent is preferable to both threat and deception, are we not back in the great tradition of the literature of freedom?

The problem with Skinner's work and mind is that he is not interested in the dialectic of conflict. He prefers to speak of "an optimal state of equilibrium in which everyone is maximally reinforced." It is the confidence that this optimum is achievable and measurable that relieves us of the need for "freedom" and reduces it to a superstition. At that point one reflects on the curious marriage between scientific and Utopian thought in our time. That our society is in acute disequilibrium is easy to point out. But this rage for order in the mind of a man like Skinner probably has a different source, the discipline of the laboratory or the purity of results in the natural sciences which rest on their techniques of objectification. One has to have a great affection for the human animal to

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be patient with his waywardness. So too the Utopian drift of mind moves toward the abstractions of welfare or justice. These are "equilibriums," and "freedom," or what is expressed in its name, is obviously a priority of another kind. Perhaps the great defect of modern democratic culture is that it cannot adequately imagine what that priority is.

On the other hand we may still be better off than we would be with Skinner's lucid and simple idea of an "optimal equilibrium." He has admitted that behavior may be conditioned to require considerable sacrifice, even that of life itself, for the good which comes "after my death."* We are not then in a happy hedonistic playground at all. The culture experiment begins to assume sinister proportions. We will presumably be surrounded by agents of evolutionary survival, some of them to be controllers, who will be ready to act at our individual expense as well as their own. The only reserve will be that they must condition us to like it.

It is out of place here to tell Skinner what freedom is, if he doesn't know, and why it is a value that might determine the survivability of a culture. And yet curiously enough, he comes up with an analogous term, useful for his own purposes in his lexicon of human behavior. For example, he understands the need to limit or restrain "wrong" control. But this happens naturally enough in the form of what he calls "counter-control." By this he sometimes seems to mean the way in which laboratory animals control the experiment by their reactions to positive or aversive contingencies. If you prick me, I bleed. In the cultural area the equivalent would be the breeding of revolt or milder manifestations of discontent. Any good controller would then bring up counter-counter-controls which would cancel what was aversive; in the most reductive example we might call it sugaring the pill. Basically I think Skinner imagines counter-control coming from other controllers or scientists. In science if someone does a poor experiment, someone else does a better, and the competitive exchange of knowledge weeds out the failures. Scientists, let us say, work in order to impress other scientists. But what if the social technologist were satisfied with the impression he made on his own subjects in the empire of his experiment?

Such questions aside, Skinner admits that "The great problem is to arrange effective counter-control and hence to bring some important consequences to bear on the behavior of the controller." His book and his theory betray the moral resourcelessness of his "science" at exactly this point. It might be, he says, that democracy will work better than other systems. "Self-government often seems to solve the problem by identifying the controller with the controlled." But, he goes on to say, a culture is controlled by what happens to it, and what happens to it affects both controller and controlled. If survival is the chief criterion of value and if institutionalized freedom, or democracy, is ineffective in terms of survival, something else must be substituted. In sum the only real or important counter-control is success or failure in the effort at control. But that is tautological unless I pronounce what I regard as worthy of survival.

And so we are back to the issue of values, which Skinner has not escaped by speaking of survival. Nor will other reformers who use the blackmail of crisis psychology, the warning of the holocaust, think that they can escape the problem of values. Perhaps it will be best to admit that the values of a free society were not created in the interest of biological survival. It could be argued that in basic aspects human culture was created in contempt of nature. Men were determined to subordinate its will to theirs, not only in terms of outwitting and outguessing nature, but also in refusing to define themselves and their relationships on the restricted basis of naturalist values.

What values exist beyond these is more and more difficult to formulate for ourselves, but I doubt if social science will succeed very soon in doing so. Skinner is a particularly crude but honest sort of social scientist. In a taped dialogue with Richard I. Evans (published as a book†), Skinner expressed his impatience with anything but observable events. In talking about the training of children while accounting for their emotional needs, he says,

> I don't see the reason to postulate a need anywhere along the line. . . . I could make a pigeon a high achiever by reinforcing it on a proper schedule. I can't do it by ordering the needs. I don't know how to order needs. There is no way you can put a key in a slot and twist a need.

He makes his point as strongly as possible.

> It doesn't make any difference to me whether things are conscious or unconscious; the causality in behavior doesn't depend on consciousness.

In effect consciousness follows behavior and not the reverse. If we can gain access to behavior without going through consciousness, so much the better and easier for everyone. But then we are still left with that mysterious undefined consciousness which belongs to the controllers interested in behavior. What Skinner doesn't see is that consciousness is not of primary use to behavior except in relation to another consciousness. "It is the environment which acts upon the perceiving person, not the perceiving person who acts upon the environment." But in saying this he forgets that we are dominantly in a human environment, not a natural one, and the human environment is made up of "perceiving persons," endowed for better or worse with consciousness.

I THINK Skinner must have had some sort of reversed religious experience, converting to the puritanism of science, when he could not find an ultimate autonomous person in behavior, acting independently at any point from his environment. But if there is no metaphysical or scientific way of locating this person, the traditional "inner man," or "homunculus," Skinner calls him, is that a reason for denying what is obvious, that we live by a kind of functioning

* Skinner says as an afterthought that personal survival after death may be a metaphorical adumbration of the evolutionary concept of survival value.

† *B. F. Skinner, The Man and His Ideas* (Dutton, 1968).

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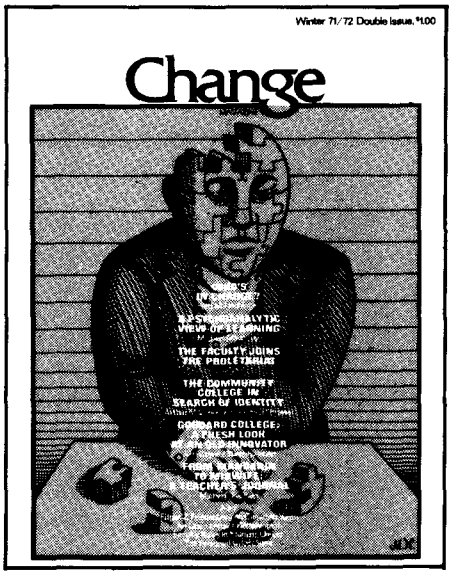

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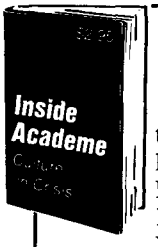

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disguise of autonomy, that we have selves in any case, and that the best definition of the self comes not in the objective exposition of the laboratory but in a dialogue of persons? The context of this dialogue is political and ethical and it is the right context for locating the valid use of the word "freedom."

It is an unhappy paradox in a time of righteous fervor, when moral hysteria is almost as rampant as it must have been in 17th-century Salem, that a campaign is so steadily being fought against the traditional idea of an ethical personality. From one side the romantic anarchists, taught by Norman O. Brown or Wilhelm Reich, would discharge men from controls and give them up to the libidinal sea where identities embrace and fuse in an organic bliss. Or if we prefer we are in a world of completely integrated selves who might have sprung, insofar as any environmentalist could tell, from the forehead of Zeus. From Skinner's side, social control takes over; it defines itself as ubiquitous, omnipotent, and quite naturally benevolent, if we would let it be. Good environments replace the natural goodness of the romantic "homunculus." In Skinner's words, "man has not evolved as an ethical or moral animal." He has no inherent ethical nature or even a need for ethical standards. "He has evolved to the point at which he has constructed an ethical or moral culture." There is no value in talking about an ethical self. There are only ethical cultures which manipulate selves.

The answer to both these extremes must take, I think, the way of explaining the distinction between man and his culture, between behavior and consciousness, between freedom and power. In the end freedom is only a word which describes the indeterminacy of being in the human understanding. This becomes not only a truth but a necessary moral assumption. Intelligence requires a counter-intelligence, power, a counter-power. Survival is not nearly so much a value-fact as are the productive ways in which we live our lives, the ways of communicating consciousness. Why should culture be managed on terms different from the deepest personal relationships? The answer is that it can't.

Finally one must acknowledge a level of experience which may be considered prior to or culminating from behavior, it doesn't matter which. Behavior begins or ends with consciousness and the latter becomes the fact of distinctive personal existence. For Skinner it is not so much a matter that a man is hungry and you've fed him, but what behavior you get out of him *when* you feed him. Personality dissolves in a sequence of events which lead to an accumulation of non-aversive results, presumably measured from the outside by the intelligence of controllers. But the human subject demands that to some extent at least events be interpreted as they stop with him. If I am hungry I wish to be fed regardless of further enabling consequences. My hunger is an existential datum of my life and consciousness, and I will demand that it be respected independently of anything else. If it is not I shall know where I am, as Melville's Bartleby said in somewhat similar circumstances, imprisoned in the New York Tombs. It will not do any good to confront me with my usefulness or uselessness to something called the survival of a species or a culture. This may actually express my original condition in nature but that gives me no comfort at all. It was not to repeat the condition of nature that I have embarked upon the life in culture.

Madam President

ELEANOR AND FRANKLIN. By JOSEPH P. LASH. *Norton. 784 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by DOROTHY RABINOWITZ

NOTHING in the American temper surpasses the claim that mystery makes upon our hearts, except perhaps our love of the obvious. No people is more apt to give itself so wholly to the visible and the stated, none is more quick to reject the latent; yet no people has been shrewder in totalling all the givens of the men it chooses for leaders. In Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, the American sense of the visible and the latent merged into a powerful affinity, and the American people acted to return FDR to the Presidency for four terms.

Of the two, Eleanor Roosevelt was at once the more obvious and the more inscrutable. The American public loved her for what she said and what she did; but her shadowy and tight-lipped soul assured its deepest claims on our attention precisely in that large measure which it would always reserve of itself. Joseph Lash tells much that was never before known of her—and that, in an unambiguously loving way. Nevertheless, what this book does most strikingly is to preserve the sense of enigma which surrounds Eleanor Roosevelt. To recognize the fact that after knowing all—all that Mr Lash knows of what she did, wrote, thought, and suffered—we still know so little of what she was, is to acknowledge that some part of her, perhaps the deepest part, the part that is called personality, was consigned to silence of a particularly obdurate kind.

Mr. Lash's effort to break this silence is not advanced as far as one might hope by the accumulation of detail, though he certainly has that in plenitude; or by repetition, in which the book abounds; or, it seems necessary to say, by proclamation. The uniformly reverent reviews of *Eleanor and Franklin* have yielded many kinds of praise, not a few of them extraordinary for their perversity. To give but one example, the book has been acclaimed for its avoidance of clinical "psychologizing": but no biography I have read in recent years is more replete with the stuff. Mr. Lash's technique is to attribute to some vague "psychologists" his own consistent dependency on the analytic casebook. Typically, of Eleanor with her finger in her mouth: "Child psychologists had not yet discovered the connection between the 'finger in the mouth' and the hunger for affection." There is, of course, nothing wrong with the analytic mode, provided one is willing to take responsibility for it: it has yielded us a few revelations in our lifetime, despite the fashionable current wish to have it and not to have it,

DOROTHY RABINOWITZ, *whose articles and reviews appear frequently in these pages, is the co-author of* Home Life *(Macmillan).*

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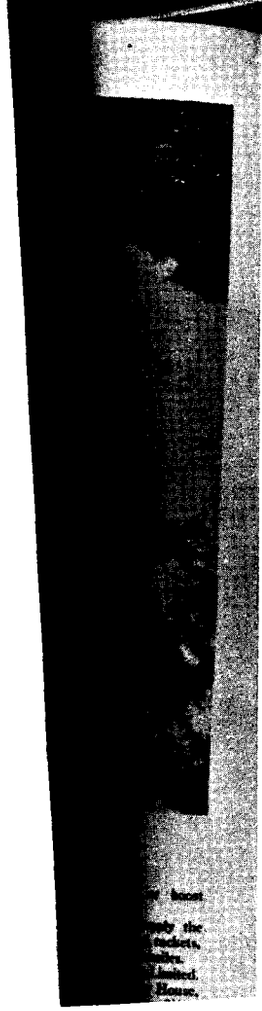

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to use and to appear not to be using it.

The encomiums to "forthrightness," to an "unsparing unsentimental" view of Eleanor Roosevelt are more puzzling. True, Mr. Lash's tone is dry enough upon occasion: but lack of sentimentality is no more the absence, simply, of tears than sentimentality is the presence of feeling. Sentimentality is, among other things, falsification, that inflation of character and degree of circumstance which is meant to draw emotion. The key word here is not emotion but inflation, and on this a great part of Mr. Lash's work is grounded. There is a kind of frankness which works solely in the service of sentimentality and it is clearly at work here. It tells its few awful truths and thenceforward marches confidently free of blame for all its subsequent excesses. Apparently critics are inclined to call such books candid. Of course this biography *is* deeply sentimental and not least in the wrenching determinism with which everything Eleanor did and thought the length of a long and varied career is related to its origins in her sad childhood.

On one level, Mr. Lash ought certainly to be granted his perspective: he was a protégé and he writes like one, and nowhere more obviously than in the faintly awed credulity with which he renders the grand New York society in which the Roosevelts moved. His portrait of "The World into Which Eleanor Was Born," as one of the early chapters is titled, is a popular-history version of the 1880's. Gay rich people—Eleanor's parents among them—are portrayed tripping along on their merry doomed way. Society's gallants and blades, the wealthy and the indifferent (ignorant of how soon everything would end for them), constituted the world into which the future first lady of the New Deal was born. One sees how it all came together in Mr. Lash's mind. Entertaining as this is—for it is entertainment, it is a history-story with a moral—there is a simplism to this sort of vision that does something to the authority of the history at hand.

Something of that problem is posed in a more important way by the unofficial major theme of the book: that Eleanor Roosevelt was a crucial arm of the Roosevelt Presidency (despite all her denials). If Mr. Lash makes an attempt at balance in his appraisal of Eleanor Roosevelt, that balance disappears in his curious effort to actualize a psychological identity for her the same as that which he thought her to be forging for herself. It is both a friend's act and a writer's way out of his insuperable difficulty: a subject whose personality remains impenetrable after all. That which she did not yield of herself, she did not have, this effort suggests. She would have a more concrete identity, therefore; she would be the secret spirit behind the Roosevelt Presidency.

In a chapter entitled, pointedly, "Wise As a Serpent, Guileless As a Dove," Mr. Lash recalls a remark made by Rexford Tugwell:

> It would be impossible to say how often and to what extent American governmental processes have been turned in new directions because of her determination that people should be hurt as little as possible. . . . The whole, if it could be totalled, would be formidable.

Tugwell's is among the more conservative estimates. Toward the end of the book, Lash observes soberly (not without the suggestion first of an inward haggle), "it is doubtful that Eleanor's presence at Yalta would have changed the course of events there." (Eleanor, we learn, asked to go, but FDR refused her request—as he did her wish to go to Cairo and to Teheran—and took instead their daughter Anna.)

Eleanor Roosevelt herself made the following observation in *This I Remember*, published in 1949:

> The political influence that was attributed to me was nil where my husband was concerned, largely because I never made the slightest effort to do what I knew I could not do. If I felt strongly about anything I told Franklin, since he had the power to do things and I did not, but he did not always feel as I felt.

There is both regret and stubborn pride here, the pride that fears to be thought mistaken in the things it wants most. But above all, it has the unmistakable ring of truth: why should we not believe her? There are frequently good reasons for the impulse not to take people at their word (at their word and in the face of logic), and in this instance one understands that the unyielding reticence of Eleanor Roosevelt's personality had, in order to be rendered, to be apparelled in a substitute identity, an identity of secret and unacknowledged power. It is not a good reason, historically speaking.

Away from the question of her influence on the President, that reticence yields better to the light of some of Mr. Lash's reasonable conjectures on the details of the marriage, among them Eleanor's indifference to food and its effect on the Presidential household. Lash observes:

> Eleanor's determination not to waste time on food made her insensitive to her husband's wishes, and she insisted that he was as indifferent to food as she was. . . . It was no secret to others, however, that Roosevelt did not like the "plain foods, plainly prepared" that were served at the mansion, but evidently there was little he could do about it except when Eleanor was away. . . . She was always on guard against the pleasure-loving side in her husband.

No doubt great issues are more tempting than the plain minutiae of life to the writer-historian. Yet it is clear—on the evidence of this work at least—that the latter yield more of what we perceive to be illuminating than does the constant exhortation to believe that there are always greater things at hand and underfoot, things greater than ever meet the eye. Indeed, that which met the eye in Eleanor Roosevelt was apparently so rich as to defy reasonable analysis. Lash recalls Rexford Tugwell's comment on the President and his wife that, "even after many years he obviously disliked to face that devastatingly simple, honest look that Eleanor fixed him with when she was aware of an injustice amenable to Presidential action."

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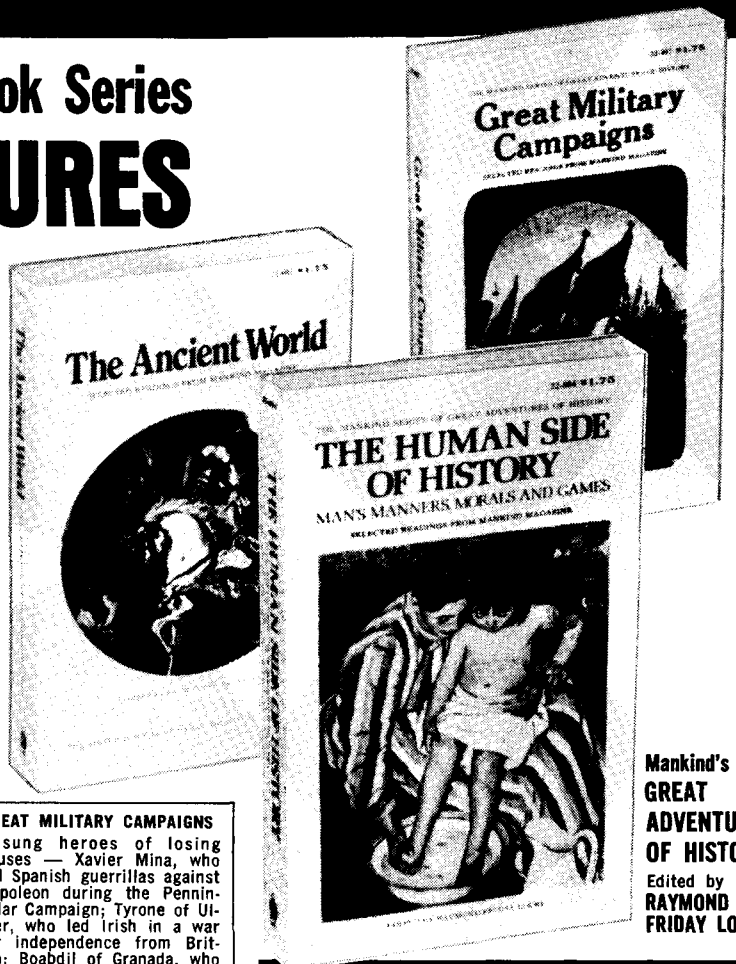

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Roosevelt era as to no other, the reality of what it meant to be President thrusts itself upon the understanding with remarkable force. FDR was the first to be in command of an America which was the leading great power, and the full might of the office is most starkly revealed in the extraordinary character of the man; in the enormous will to power so rightly attuned to the exercise of the most powerful position in the world. A man who so enjoys the power of the Presidency might listen well. But he is not going to change his decisions because of a look in his wife's eyes: especially one who gives him bad meals.

Then, gilding the lily has never done the lily any service. Eleanor Roosevelt was an incomparably great woman, in great times. She raised the power of her role as President's wife to a degree never before matched in history. But one cannot separate our sense of her greatness from the times in which she served. She possessed to a unique degree the capacity to learn from the voices about her, and she was herself, above all, the voice of great times. Whatever the private failures of her marriage, it was possible to believe in such times, as Mr. Lash conjectures she did, that there was a greater good possible than one's own happiness; or that one's happiness might be coincident only with the effort to make a better world for people.

We know that she tried and to a remarkable degree succeeded in the plan to construct a life around that effort. There was very little that escaped her attention (undoubtedly, there was much that should have). She was among the first figures in modern American life publicly to commit her hopes for the future to youth. Assuredly she was not the last. In those innocent days it was possible to hope, as she did, "to make the kind of world we want . . . if youth is allowed to have its say and I, for one, am all for giving youth all the power it can handle." Mr. Lash observes, "It was the older people who scared her." She did not live to see the harvest of her remarkable misbelief that a special virtue resides in youth. It was one of her most persistent fancies. When she was in her seventies and frail, she appeared at a meeting of New York City Reform Democrats, with the redoubtable former governor, Herbert H. Lehman. They were there to plot strategy for a victory over the old-time organization. In the course of the meeting Lehman excoriated the audience of young lawyers and Assemblymen for not doing exactly as he had told them to do. He carried on for ten or fifteen minutes, shouting at his benumbed listeners. Those who were there tell that they recovered from their paralysis only when Mrs. Roosevelt stepped forward, after Lehman stomped away, and said, "I think that it's time we old folks sat back now and let you young ones take over." They were grateful for the ease she brought to the moment. Yet, considering the intelligence that has directed every defeat of the Democratic Reform movement since that time, up to its present state of collapse, one is hard put not to think her unduly charitable.

Perhaps a belief in youth was only natural in one who had had evidence of man's frailty borne in on her so painfully, and at such close range. Her knowledge of social evil, her knowledge of the pain men could give each other, the experience of her own family, were enough to preserve a region of world-weariness in a soul that was otherwise engaged entirely with life. She had more than her share of reasons for weariness from her earliest childhood days through her marriage to Franklin, for she was one of those people whose pain is that they wait all their lives to hear that which will never be uttered. In *This I Remember* she observed:

> Franklin never told me I was a good reporter nor in the early days were any of my trips made at his request. I realized, however, that he would not question me so closely if he were not interested. . . .

She knew that he listened to her and occasionally he took seriously what she said; but he would not say the words. Indeed, her memoirs indicate, time and again, an uncertainty with regard to her husband both as to her place in his life and her influence on him: this, despite all that she should know, all that she could guess. He would show that he approved what she said, "without giving me a glance, or the satisfaction of batting an eyelash in my direction." That which is stated matters most to one whose soul must take its major nourishment from the invisible. She lived by the dictates of an inner light; yet, precisely to such, one has to say the words.

Of course, what her husband and family withheld, her public gave in abundance. What Mr. Lash does do is to document appealingly her relation to the American people, the lives she touched, the countless kindnesses expressed and deeds done. She changed lives and was changed in turn. In the most crucial way, it was history that shaped her life; but to its probing, in her lifetime and now, the heart of her is closed.

France-Amérique

WITHOUT MARX OR JESUS: THE NEW AMERICAN REVOLUTION HAS BEGUN. By JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL. *Doubleday. 269 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD GROSSMAN

TO JUDGE a book by a Frenchman that has "America" in its title by comparing it with *Democracy in America* is unfair. Tocqueville's pair of books enjoy their reputation; Revel's best-seller, little more than an extended pamphlet, will not be read or known in 2109 —a date as distant in the future as the first publication of *Democracy in America* is in the past. In spite of this, the comparison ought to be made, not so Revel can be blamed for failing to measure up, but because it reveals some stubborn similarities in what the U.S. may mean for certain foreigners, especially certain Frenchmen. Also, *Without Marx or Jesus* is not a worthless book; the comparison helps to determine what it is good for.

Tocqueville (like Revel) came to America to confirm his prejudices. Early notes and letters show he had largely decided, before he came, what America—or rather, democracy in action—must be like.

EDWARD GROSSMAN's *book,* Gulliver at the Gynecologist, *will be published later this year by Houghton-Mifflin.*

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He did not go to America with a vague and boundless curiosity, or as a tourist, and when he returned did not write one of those books (which are still popular in France) about the strange natives he had observed. It took an intelligent reader to appreciate that Tocqueville's concern, and value, was in dealing with principles, ideals, forecasts, not reportage or verisimilitude. When the second volume of *Democracy in America* came out, Sainte-Beuve complained, "For almost ten years since he left America, that country has served no more than as a pretext for the author, no more than a man of straw." Tocqueville half conceded this. He wrote to Mill, "I wished to set out the general tendencies of democratic societies of which no complete example yet exists."

But while he wrote in generalities, Tocqueville never wandered very far from the seemingly clear-cut idea—which was his prejudice—that democracy was the wave of the future, and he tried to be pretty specific in forecasting the effects of this international, apparently inevitable process on other countries, especially France.

> In America, I saw more than America; I sought the image of democracy itself, with its inclinations, its character, its prejudices, and its passions, in order to learn what we have to fear or to hope from its progress.

Tocqueville had his theory. He said it would work out over the long haul. But although he professed to "have turned my thoughts to the Future" whereas "the parties . . . are busied for the morrow," he was writing for a contemporary audience and hoped that his books would have an impact on current events in France.

WHATEVER hopes Revel has for *Without Marx or Jesus* (some possibilities suggest themselves), one of the similarities this book has with Tocqueville's is that in it a country called America is said to be a laboratory in which a generally praiseworthy process is happening for the first time, before taking place in the rest of the world; this process is described in a very general way, and, despite the writer's aspiration to a global view, his references, his preoccupations, are continually to and with France, and the peculiarities of the French. One-hundred-thirty-seven years ago, the process was democratization. Today, it is "revolution."

"I traveled," Revel says, "from New York to California, from the Establishment to the Underground. And the book that emerged from this trip is as much a book on the concept of revolution as it is a book on the United States." Tocqueville was clear about the effects of the process he said he saw operating: virtual abolition of non-genetic differences, respect for law instead of office or title, the rise of a common psychology that might lead either to the best kind of patriotism or to the oppression of the individual by no one in particular. Revel, pointing at a U.S. in the midst of "revolution" at the end of his own theory, is unclear about what he means by the term. Or rather, he is apparently clear on one page, then contradicts himself, and finally asserts that "revolution" is indefinable and unpredictable, "since it has never happened before."

Early on, he explains that a revolution "without Marx or Jesus" is one that can be predicted, striven for, and described by means of neither of the ideologies that many Frenchmen go on adhering to, in their way, sometimes concurrently: Marxism and Catholicism. The "revolution" he is talking about will work itself out by hitherto unimagined methods of "dissent" and "innovation." However, it seems it will achieve an old aim: the guaranteed right to have ideas and express them freely in words and diverse "life-styles." "Liberty," Revel asserts, bringing in some old ideological terminology, "is, or should be, the life's breath of socialist civilizations." Sometimes a permanent increase in liberty is what Revel seems to mean by "revolution." Elsewhere "equality" (the second condition in the famous slogan of what is for Revel the first French non-revolution) is what it seems his "revolution" will achieve, with political participation by everyone—democracy as Tocqueville understood it. "The purpose of the . . . revolution is to create real equality among men, and to give to men the political means to decide for themselves on the great matters affecting their destiny." Revel does not pin himself down. Perhaps the closest that can be gotten to understanding what is meant by the loaded word in this book is *a real change for the better.*

THE fuzziness of Revel's "concept" is not so important at first, since his project is clearly not to write a treatise on a topic of political science, but (if his previous work is an indication) to produce a pamphlet that will provoke and amaze. If Revel's book does not "succeed," it is because his style of provocation may be better suited for slashing than praising. In *Without Marx or Jesus,* this style is employed assertively. Like a good pamphleteer, Revel gets the attention of his audience from the first line, by surprise: "The revolution of the 20th century will take place in the United States. It is only there that it can happen. And it has already begun. Whether or not that revolution spreads to the rest of the world depends on whether or not it succeeds first in America." An American may be puzzled or bored by these sentences; he is not apt to be provoked. They express ideas—or better, sentiments—that have been in the air of late. In the least theoretical parts of his book, Revel offers as proofs some extremely familiar observations.

> The moral revolution, the new forms in music, art, and spectator-entertainment are all part of the battle. Sexual liberty, pop music, marijuana have become as much a part of politics as politics has become a part of morality. Pop-music festivals, of which Woodstock has become the prototype, are explosions of personal and sexual expression, of liberating behavior and music, in which all these elements take on political dimensions.

Tocqueville also relied heavily on fireside chats with American informants (mostly bankers and merchants) who were readily available during his short stay. But Tocqueville never passes on with such a lack of judgment "proofs" like the one just quoted. An accumulation of fashionable, lightweight clichés posing as consequential matter sets up Revel's book for the criticism

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Charles de Gaulle is said to have made of a book closely related to Revel's—Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's *The American Challenge: "Ces propositions sont légères."*

If an American is provoked by anything in this book, it is the "facts" that are supposed to support Revel's thesis. They are the sort a journalist might get from informants on his way through a strange country. "The General-Electric strike [winter, 1969-70] was considered one of the most significant social movements in America since 1930." Revel does not say by whom the GE strike was so considered. Or again, "In 1967, . . . the hippie population of San Francisco was about 300,000." A remarkable fact, if true, making almost half of the city's inhabitants "hippies"; but Revel does not define what a "hippie" is, beyond someone who "dissents" against the "Establishment" and wears strange clothes. No source is given for this statistic.

Without Marx or Jesus is a best-seller in the U.S., but probably for a different reason than in France. Revel's book must be mildly comforting for dull-minded Americans; it is irritating and fascinating mainly for a French person, maybe as much so as its author's other books.

Jean-François Revel (the pen-name of a columnist for the weekly *L'Express*) is a well-known signature in France, synonomous with a brand of writing that expresses contempt for nearly everything French. Very often in Revel's previous production, seldom in *Without Marx or Jesus,* an American is reminded of Mencken. Six years ago Revel wrote a book-length polemic against the French that started, "When one travels in France, one becomes aware of how miraculous it is that there are any Frenchmen who manage to think at all." Revel denied not only that the French are more intelligent than other people, which is often taken for granted, but also that they have better taste. "The average Frenchman," he observed with relish, "looks as though he were dressed in his kid brother's shirt, his late uncle's pants, and a jacket he picked up from a bench on a subway platform." Of the half-dozen books Revel wrote before *Without Marx or Jesus* all (with the exception of an appreciation of Proust) were attacks on something French: the French "mentality," de Gaulle, the "Left," the "Right." In his own country Revel has acquired a reputation for being hard to please. He has not sought to avoid it. "This book is entirely negative," he once warned prospective readers in a foreword. "Those who like positive ideas should go no further."

When he was "positive" about anything, it was almost always something outside France that inspired him. In a column on French militarism Revel asserted, "America and Britain, with their democratic sensibility, view war as a terrible, painful fact, tolerable only because of its high moral aims." Taken out of context a sentence like this is open to the type of criticism that whole sections of *Without Marx or Jesus* are vulnerable to: it makes an American remember things, including Saturday matinees at the movies, that seem to prove that Americans do *not* "view war as a terrible, painful fact." But only when the sentence is considered out of context. Until this book, Revel was not "positive" about anything for long. Occasional bits of praise or admiration functioned effectively as tactical devices to chastise and shame the French reader. An American cannot be sure if Revel caressed some masochistic nerve, some sense of failure in his readers that is pride turned inside-out. It is obvious, though, that until now Revel used examples from "America" sparingly; his vocation was to write pamphlets—short ones in *L'Express,* longer in his books—flaying the French knowledgeably (Revel is highly educated) in a style and with a content suited to this purpose.

Much of the best in French pamphleteering is justified only by its consummate vicious nihilism. But Revel's work, bright and delicious, has never been bleak like Céline's, and his arrogant "negativism" has not obscured a "constructive" purpose—to blow the French out of their rut. Likewise, writers vaguely associated with the "Right" have written the best pamphlets, but there have also been contributors (Proudhon) who can be located more plausibly, though not less vaguely, toward the other end of the old spectrum. Revel is one of them. He would not object to being called "a man of the democratic Left," only asserting that for a long time that party in France has been worthy of nothing but a decent funeral. Following the French custom of the literary man "intervening" in politics, Revel once contested a seat in the National Assembly, running on the Socialist ticket. He came in a poor third behind the Gaullist and the Communist. This did not alter his often-expressed belief that the French adore generals and kings, cannot govern themselves, and are hopelessly stupid. Yet Revel seems to have stayed a democrat, like the Tocqueville of *Democracy in America,* and unlike Mencken.

When harping on the highhandedness of de Gaulle and his ministers, Revel was reminiscent of Tocqueville, who, after finishing *Democracy in America* (and failing in his first try for election), spent eight years in the National Assembly, always in opposition to the ruling monarchy though unable to find a party he could bring himself to join. The events of 1848 gave him a brief, ill-fated chance to associate himself with the Republic and participate in the exercise of power. After the events of 1968, which seem to have had as terrific an effect on some Frenchmen as 1848 had on their ancestors, a party turned up that Revel aligned himself with, showing more enthusiasm than in his adventure with the Socialists. This was the revamped Radical party under Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber.

Servan-Schreiber publishes *L'Express* and wrote *The American Challenge,* which appeared in 1967. There he warned that France was becoming an economic colony of the U.S. due to American technological superiority and de Gaulle's preoccupation with the past; the only way to halt this development would be for France to drop outmoded nationalism and take the lead in forming a unified Europe capable of competing with the Americans. This book was the all-time French best-seller, from

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"I say 'Watch out' for those gatekeepers in our society who now say to black people 'Fellows, capitalism is not for you. Stay out of the big game. You will only go to the cleaners.' I say 'Watch out' because those who are looking so assiduously after your interests are also busy perfecting a new reading machine that will abolish a quarter of a million key punch operator jobs only recently won by your brothers and sisters. And do not fail to note that those who now would separate you from capital also happen to be the grandchildren of ancient protectors who, fifty years ago, told Negros in the south to tend to their jobs in the cotton fields and not to worry about trying to own some of the machines that put them out of work."

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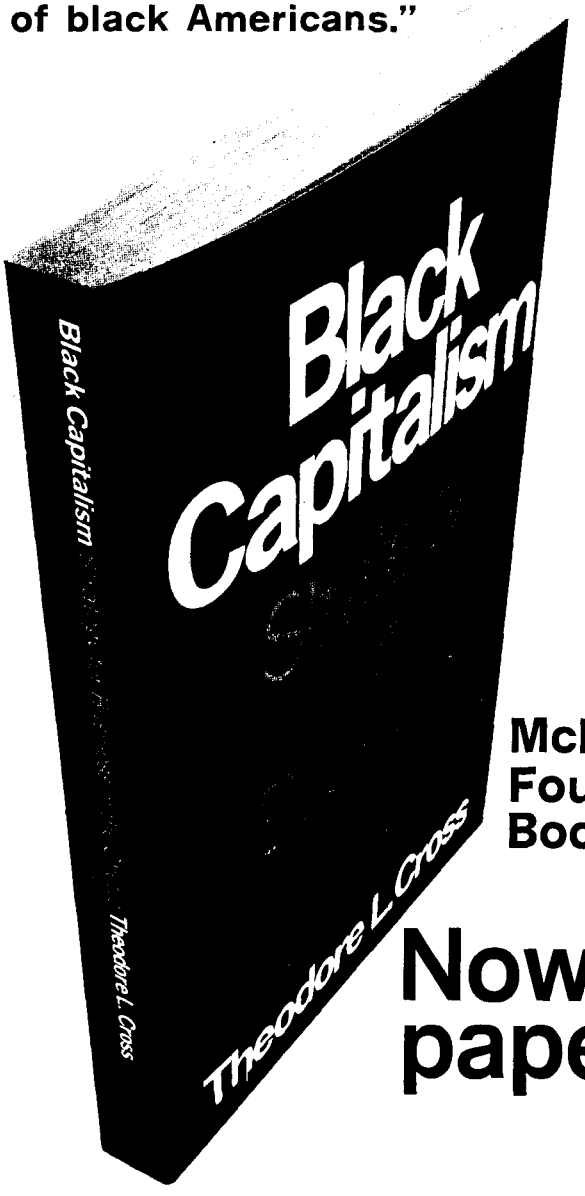
—from the author's preface

*The President's Office of Economic Opportunity reports that blacks in America own about $382 per family in all financial and capital assets as against $5,924 for the average white family.



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which it could be inferred that some of the French were dissatisfied with Gaullism, or fascinated by America, or both. After the events of 1968 showed that dissatisfaction was deeper and wider than anyone had thought, and also that no party between the Communists and the Gaullists knew how to take advantage of it, Servan-Schreiber went into politics. He was elected Secretary-General of the Radicals, a hulk of the party that had dominated the Third Republic. *Heaven and Earth*, the platform Servan-Schreiber wrote, goes on from where *The American Challenge* left off. It is more than a "positive" document—it is positivistic, presenting earnest and attractive-sounding prescriptions for France: decentralization, a true merit system, freedom of information, popular "participation" in the running of institutions, including universities. Many of the examples of the efficacy of such reforms are drawn from America.

Servan-Schreiber made quick headway. *Without Marx or Jesus* was written when his political stock was high, maybe as high as it will ever be: the summer of 1970. He had taken a parliamentary seat from a Gaullist, right in Lorraine. De Gaulle was dead, and there was talk of Servan-Schreiber facing the heir, Pompidou, in the next Presidential election. But by the end of the year Servan-Schreiber had been badly beaten in another election in which he had unwisely chosen to oppose a much more powerful Gaullist. He resigned his Radical post. Tortuous negotiations with "right-wing" Socialists and "left-wing" Gaullists, aiming to create an alliance, got bogged down. Servan-Schreiber's detractors might now more plausibly dismiss him as an old-fashioned politician in "American" disguise. The reference is not just invidious, for as well as campaigning in shirtsleeves and a personal jet, he had invoked America as a model for hope and progress. In *Heaven and Earth*, for example: "America is a world in itself . . . in America hope has always been rewarded . . . we must study America."

SERVAN-SCHREIBER, like Revel, was actually in an old French tradition when he praised America as the new land where history beckons to be made. This is the typical message of a certain type of Frenchman who risks being embittered (as Tocqueville was) if he goes into politics with the dream of making his country over into a more open and optimistic place. The terms of the message change little. Sixty years before Tocqueville, another of those Frenchmen, Crèvecoeur, reported, "Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion. . . . The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles."

There are always Frenchmen relaying the message, and many others listening eagerly and reacting either with pleased fascination or provoked irritation. Those in Revel's audience who are surprised and upset to be told that the "revolution" will come from America belong to the species of ordinary French for whom the word "revolution" has formidable "positive" connotations, and for whom the lurid reflection of the U.S. in Sartre or Godard, or on French TV, is convincing, satisfying, and necessary. Some are more energetic: an American visitor in France may be given the lowdown on the U.S. by a French person whose closest approach to this country has been a vacation in Cuba. One learns that it is an article of faith with such persons that any real change for the better can only be achieved outside the U.S., by non-Americans at the expense of American interests. Revel knows his French, and many of the assertions in *Without Marx or Jesus* are aimed to exasperate such types.

Those wrongly presumed to be quite the opposite of the "revolutionaries" are also apt to be disturbed by the implication that since America is in the historical forefront, the French can only follow. De Gaulle was the magnificent exemplification of the patriot who looked down on Americans as powerful barbarians, hostile to the civilizing mission of France and to the concept of aristocracy. It is not only the Gaullists who try their best to carry on in this tradition, and are therefore offended by Revel; many "revolutionaries," too, mostly without knowing it, are dismayed that France is no longer at the center of things, and that their own enterprises have become more and more provincial, peripheral, and unimportant. Except in moviemaking, that situation Tocqueville dreaded and did not expect would occur has at last come about. He wished that France would remain "the most brilliant and the most dangerous nation of Europe, and the one that is surest to inspire admiration, hatred, terror, or pity, but never indifference." No nation in Europe any longer inspires strong feelings. This is a source of some trouble today for more people than like to admit it in the European nation-state that was admired, hated, etc. longer and more vehemently than any other. Even a sincere liberal and good European like Revel, who bids good riddance to his country's past and tells tales about a better, mythical America, must be a bit unhappy about it in his heart of hearts.

A Pretty Girl . . .

THERE SHE IS: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MISS AMERICA. By FRANK DEFORD. *Viking. 351 pp. Illustrated. $10.00.*

Reviewed by ANNE HOLLANDER

MISS AMERICA is chosen every September in Atlantic City, and promptly sinks into oblivion so far as most of the nation is concerned. The televised pageant at which she is crowned, however, apparently commands the attention of an enormous number, more than any other television special ever gets except the Academy Awards, Bob Hope, and the Super Bowl. Indeed, somewhere about the middle of *There She Is*, Frank Deford observes that if Bob Hope were to crown Miss America during half-time at the Super Bowl, the whole nation would grind to a halt, since according to the figures every man, woman, and child would be watching television at that moment.

There is a felicitous combination of appealing elements in the

ANNE HOLLANDER's *review of* The Unfashionable Human Body *by Bernard Rudofsky appeared in our December 1971 number.*

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Miss America Pageant that is evidently irresistible to Americans of all kinds, most of whom don't give it a thought between one September and the next—except, of course, for those seventy-thousand girls who annually aim for the title. Before eighty-million people can see her crowned, a girl has had to devote herself for a good part of the year to the winning of beauty contests—not to being beautiful, of course, but to being chosen. She triumphantly represents the traditional American goal of "personal achievement" in its purest form: to win a competition in competition-winning.

The television popularity of the Atlantic City finals demonstrates the strength of our national delight in watching and comparing pretty girls, a pleasure which is certainly not lessened when the circumstances are free of guilt and laden with sanctions. Miss America's appeal is obviously not "real" beauty or even physical attraction, but a kind of conventional artlessness about these qualities. Her sexuality is supposed to be the virginal, unconscious kind which allows the dirty thoughts in the mind of the beholder to be pleasurably spiced with avuncular, fraternal, or romantic admiration; and her careful poise and lovely self-confidence appeal strongly to chivalry or brutality in men and to potentially jealous women as well, because they seem to have been acquired through a tantalizing, exasperating, or perhaps comforting ignorance of the power of sex. Pictures of girls with just this quality have been successfully used for decades in the United States to sell every kind of commodity. The absolute value, in the American commercial consciousness, of that particular kind of pretty girl is what Miss America celebrates. She herself is a pure example, free for the moment of any specific, sordid connections with shampoo or beer: her undeniable power to move goods and support the economy can be abstractly recognized and adored.

The most interesting single fact, therefore, in Mr. Deford's book is that aside from the girl herself, no one makes money out of the Miss America Pageant. The entire enterprise, all the way up from small local beauty contests, is made possible by community support which apparently continues to be steady and enthusiastic. A community organization, usually the Jaycees, donates many hours of volunteer labor to produce a local pageant which is franchised by Atlantic City. The winner may then compete for something like Blueberry Queen before trying out for the State title, and further glories at Convention Hall if she succeeds. Since the overwhelming majority of contestants come from rural areas and small towns, Miss America tends slightly to exude the fragrance of the South, where there are fewer urban centers. She is a modern belle, now complete with connotations of political conservatism accompanying the traditional sovereign desire to please men. Her style of feminine ideal is not actually so much Southern as old-fashioned, and as such evidently still dear to middle-aged Middle America. Mr. Deford points out that Miss America nowadays entirely fails to represent American youth, even more noticeably than before, since recent trends in youthful mores have all originated either on the East or West coasts, in the big cities which have produced none of the recent Miss Americas. The judges at Atlantic City, one must remember, are all at least a generation older than the girls.

The same geographic and demographic circumstances help to account for the absence of black contestants over the past years, although no discrimination has officially been applied. The local pageants which send their finalists to the state contests are usually held in areas with very small black populations. Application is by invitation, however, and if the Jaycees in such communities were to broaden their racial scope, more black contestants might eventually reach Atlantic City. Nevertheless Mr. Deford observes: ". . . it seems that Americans will cross racial lines to vote for politicians, root for athletes, laugh at comedians, even pay for prostitutes faster than they will vote for beauty queens." A slight flavor of bad faith surrounds the fact that Washington, D..C, the only place with a black majority, is not represented at the Miss America pageant. Black beauty pageants have been created, not in new original forms, but directly on the Miss America model, which proves that however they may be criticized, beauty contests evidently cannot be improved upon.

Apart from charges of conservatism and racism, Miss America was an obvious sitting duck for the whole arsenal of the Women's Liberation movement, which picketed the pageant in 1968. Naturally enough, the only thing accomplished for Women's Lib was a lot of publicity, and the crowd at Atlantic City had a more exciting show than usual. The following year a threatened demonstration was neatly prevented, and the next year there was none at all. Essentially everyone else continued to feel the absolute harmlessness of the Miss America beauty pageant, which could be characterized at its worst as no more than silly. It doesn't even make money for the mean and wicked, or gain votes for the unworthy. It has, as Mr. Deford reminds us, "nothing to do with womanhood, with morality, with big business, with modesty, with Vietnam, or most of the other things it has been associated with. . . ." It remains "a bunch of pretty girls parading around." The harmlessness is officially certified by the chronic impecuniousness of the pageant, which only gets enough money from its TV sponsors to cover expenses. Any immoral connection between sex and money is thus kept far from Atlantic City's bathing beauties, who may exhibit their charms before judges and the public at large in a positively tangible cloud of wholesomeness.

The awarding of college scholarships, the requirement to appear in an evening gown and to perform in a recognized talent medium represent recent efforts to make Miss America a more solemn affair than a simple display of cheesecake. But it was always officially wholesome, and all manner of respectable citizens of Atlantic City supported it from the beginning, when it was confined to the beach. The bathing beauty portion of the contest is now actually threatened with extinction, so eager is the pageant to refrain from unduly em-

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phasizing sex. Moreover, the current fashions in nudity and semi-nudity, which the young like to think they adopt not for sexual display but to serve the spirit of nature and freedom, have indeed rendered the carefully schooled, coiffed, and high-heeled bathing beauty more obscene than she ever dreamed possible. When straight, loose hair and unconfined or visible breasts can be the customary mode of many ordinary, wholesome, serious girls, something slightly perverted and suspect seems to emanate from the celebration of boned, padded torsos and lacquered curls. Such a noticeable gap between actual fashionable ideals and the Miss America image was a feature chiefly of the late 60's, when the pageant officials refused to acknowledge the entrenched authority of miniskirts and bikinis, or the disappearance of spike heels. Miss America means to catch up in the 70's.

An artificial virtue, as well as plastic wholesomeness, is required of Miss America contestants, exaggerated by the restrictions governing their behavior in Atlantic City. They are constantly watched, prevented from speaking alone to any man whatsoever, even a relative, and each must sleep in the same room with a chaperone. This sounds like the traditional milieu for secret vice; but in fact the girls really are nice and good, none has ever been discovered to be otherwise, and all the excessive precautions are unnecessary. They do serve, like the rest of the pageant, to emphasize sex indirectly—an old American habit, still possessed of great currency and power despite the modishness of healthy license.

There She Is is an extremely satisfying book, partly because its tone is exactly suited to the quality of one's curiosity about the subject. Mr. Deford does not attack, defend, or apologize, nor does he condescend or giggle. He has treated both Miss America (the girl) and *Miss America* (the pageant, always thus scrupulously distinguished) in serious and even rather affectionate depth, leaving no aspect of the entire phenomenon unexamined. He describes a small community beauty contest, the kind from which every Miss America originally emerges, and then the subsequent training and grooming of contestants for the state finals, and who accomplishes it. Sociological observations and commentary accompany all this, delivered with considerable wit and care. There is a chapter about Atlantic City itself and what role the pageant plays there, and another chapter about the influence of television on the public style of Miss America. The history of the pageant since 1921 and of the winners of the past is given a good deal of space. Mr. Deford is adept at quick character sketches, and we are left feeling we know them all —the past Miss Americas whom he has tracked down to discover what life really did have in store for them afterward, what they look like now, and what they think of the whole business.

The very best part of the book, however, is the group of appendices at the back. Here we have the essence of what we want to know, broken down into tables and lists for comparative analysis. The largest is Your Miss America Scorecard, beginning with the year, name, residence, measurements, age, and coloring of all the Miss Americas and a complete list of finalists, and then proceeding through an exhaustive set of tables of averages for every pertinent fact about them. One may be delighted, though not surprised, to learn from these that breasts have become bigger and waists smaller since 1921; and, further, that in 1951 the bust hit thirty-five inches for the first time, and in 1953 the waist went under twenty-four inches for good, whereas in 1965 busts were larger than hips for the first time. Similar though less absorbing details are available about the girls' education, talent, and hobbies. Sewing, for instance, has become a hobby of tremendous popularity among contestants, although it was never mentioned until after World War II. This fact is a reflection, or rather an echo, of earlier days when sewing was a menial household task and not a creative outlet.

The last tables are devoted to first names, those fascinating emblems of taste, geography, and ethnic origins. There is a complete list of the names which have been used by contestants, and several interesting statistics: 475 different names have appeared, of which 280 have only appeared once; Blanche, Rachel, and Veronica, among others, have not shown up at all for thirty years, whereas Karen, Linda, and Diane have only arrived in the last decade. The very last list is simply a group of names called Our Own Hall of Fame, in which are inscribed the unforgettable names of such long-forgotten hopefuls as Emmajar Newby, Wayring Smathers, and Meta Justice.

Mr. Deford, who is a senior editor of *Sports Illustrated*, has a kind of effortless journalistic style which can steer a clever, smooth course between cliché and gag. The second most interesting fact in the book, incidentally, is that in the whole history of the pageant since 1921, including several dramatic scandals, there has never been the slightest breath of a fix. This somehow seems to establish it for all time as a totally innocuous, wholly sterile, and supremely boring national institution.

High Mandarin

IN BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE: SOME NOTES TOWARDS THE REDEFINITION OF CULTURE. By GEORGE STEINER. *Yale University Press. 141 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by IRVING HOWE

A PHALANX of crucial topics, a tone of high-church gravity, a light sprinkle of multilingual erudition, a genteel stab at prophecy (Mr. Steiner will be remembered as the critic who reminds us not to forget the Holocaust)—it's easy to imagine the strong impression these lectures must have made when first delivered for the T.S. Eliot Memorial Foundation at the University of Kent. And now, when we read his first sentence announcing that this book is written "in memoration" of T.S. Eliot, we are immediately prepared for some very high-class prose.

Western culture, Mr. Steiner says, is irremediably shattered, all our certainties destroyed and axioms

IRVING HOWE *is professor of English at Hunter and editor of* Dissent.

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bent; yet not for a moment does this cause him to strain his syntax, lose his cool, or breathe an ill-mannered rasp. His style, in all its mincing equanimity, can assimilate equally a few paragraphs on Milton's verse and a few on the slaughter of six million Jews. His prose remains creamy and mellifluous, a high Mandarin patter that reads at times as if it were a parody by Lucky Jim. Here is a glorious passage:

> At every knot, from the voices of public men to the vocabulary of dreams, language is close-woven with lies. Falsehood is inseparable from its generative life. Music can boast, it can sentimentalize, it can release springs of cruelty. But it does not lie. (Is there a lie, anywhere, in Mozart?)

Smiles of appreciative concord flit through the auditorium—and who would be so rude as to remark that the reason there is no "lie," anywhere, in Mozart's music is precisely the same reason that there is no "truth"? In short, that Mr. Steiner isn't making sense?

In Bluebeard's Castle is divided into four chapters, of which the second and third form a unit; I will therefore consider the book in three parts. Each is marked by an overriding strategy: the author announces urgent themes, names burning problems, dances around them a little, and then avoids every difficulty they raise.

In his first chapter, concerned to bound our cultural crisis, Mr. Steiner looks back to the 19th century and finds that "certain specific origins of the inhuman . . . are to be found in [its] long peace. . . ." He is right. The point has been made frequently, but is surely worth repeating, that in the century of melioristic progress "we can find a counterstatement of nervous fatigue." It consists of ennui, signs of which Mr. Steiner traces in European culture during the second half of the century, and this ennui gives rise to "a longing for violent dissolution."

But, we might remember, this is the time in which the cultural phenomenon we call "modernism" —in all its brilliance and force, all its truth and deception—was coming to the forefront. For a moralist of culture, a historian of sensibility, it would, at this point, seem necessary to struggle with the painful question: What is the relation between the problematic genius of the modernist outburst and the historical catastrophe that soon followed it? Are they, in some way or to some extent, causally linked? Are they polar opposites, enemies in a struggle to the death? Is it methodologically appropriate, or merely vulgar, to search for some of the roots of 20th-century social disaster in the cultural upheavals preceding it? By no means sure of the answers, I can hardly expect anyone else to be; but it seems inconceivable that, in a book discussing both the nature of cultural modernism and the subsequent convulsions of Europe, Mr. Steiner should not even ask such questions. Anyone, to be sure, who did ask them would be obliged to confront some major literary reputations and would have to expect, no matter which line of attack he took, some bitter and passionate replies. But why not?

Mr. Steiner's skittishness deepens in the second part of the book. He sees the triumph of Nazism as the last in a series of impulsive rebellions by natural man against the noble tyranny of monotheism, that dubious and unwanted blessing the Jews lowered upon the world:

> By killing the Jews, Western culture would eradicate those who had "invented" God, who had, however imperfectly, however restively, been the declarers of his unbearable Absence. The holocaust is a reflex, the more complete for being long-inhibited, of natural sensory consciousness, of instinctual polytheistic and animist needs.

This notion, too, is rather well-worn, though the claim that polytheism constitutes or stems from an "instinct" may be novel. If at first glance it seems flattering to the Jews to be told that they have been the "bad conscience" of Western history, bringing with them "the blackmail of transcendence," a moment's reflection ought to reveal that it is empty talk, at once grandiose and trivial. As an explanation for the rise of totalitarianism, it suffers from a characteristic fault of *Geistesgeschichte*: the encapsulation of an extremely complex group of historical events by a theory so nebulously inclusive that it leaves no possibility for refutation. And a theory that can't be refuted can't be demonstrated. If I say, Nazism arose because of certain nameable failures of German capitalism in the 1920's, or because there occurred a severe historical dislocation of the lumpen intelligentsia which could then exploit uglier elements of the Germanic and Christian traditions, or because of the vengeful consequences of the Versailles Treaty, or because the Stalinists and/or Social Democrats pursued disastrous policies, then whoever disagrees can bring evidence to bear. But how can anyone verify or argue against Mr. Steiner's notion? Of what use is it, therefore, to remark that "Western culture" can hardly be said to have killed the Jews, it was the Nazis who killed them, and indeed, it might be a little more plausible to say that "Western culture" destroyed the Nazis? Or that at least in some cultures the "instinctual" pressures of polytheism seem very slight (perhaps because of a difference in climate or geography)? Or that Stalinism, the second major form of European totalitarianism, even though sharing some essential traits of cataclysmic inhumaneness with Nazism, could not possibly be explained by a conflict between regnant monotheism and rebellious polytheistic impulses?

To persons of Mr. Steiner's cast of mind, such matters constitute evidence of a "lower" order, mere historical phenomena, which cannot possibly compete with the convolutions of *Geist*. Surely, when Mr. Steiner writes, "The abruptness of the Mosaic revelation, the finality of the creed at Sinai, tore up the human psyche by its most ancient roots," he is not making a statement open to historical scrutiny. How abrupt was this Mosaic revelation? Where, in which discoverable instances, was "the human psyche" torn up by "its most ancient roots"? And what does Mr. Steiner make of those cultures that continued to live in benighted comfort, unaware of the "Mosaic revelation"?

Now it will be said that statements such as those I have quoted are not proposed for verification,

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they are a kind of "historical poetry" to be valued for their suggestiveness. Very well. Any student of Nazism would probably agree that it was freighted with elements of the irrational and demonic, and that these played a significant role in its history—for reasons, however, that had less to do with the psychic damage inherited from Moses than with the strongly visible Germanic and Christian traditions, as well as the specific historical experiences of the last century. But to start considering such elements of Nazism is already to submit oneself to the cautions of partial answers and multiple causation—which means to abandon the lordly tone of humanistic declamation which literary men (all of us) assume when pronouncing on the state of the world.

Mr. Steiner's theory has the immediate effect of releasing major institutions from their moral responsibilities. For if it is "natural sensory consciousness" that was at work in promoting the Holocaust, how much weight can we then give to Rolf Hochhuth's denunciation of the Papacy or Leon Trotsky's of the Stalinists? And if "instinctual polytheistic . . . needs" lie behind the horrors of Auschwitz, then the Christian churches, with their frequently disgraceful records in regard to anti-Semitism in Germany, may partly be let off the hook. Indeed, if such overpowering instincts are at work, instincts that have kept breaking out through the entire course of human history, then how can anyone be held morally responsible for the Nazi murders?

BUT what interests Mr. Steiner most is not the cause of the Holocaust, it is the consequences that follow. He is deeply shaken, as any sensitive person should be, by the systematic inhumanity of the camps, "the transference of Hell from below the earth to its surfaces." In scrutinizing Western culture he concludes that things can never be the same again: we have entered a phase of "post-culture." Precisely what "post-culture" can mean I have tried to make out, and failed. If someone says, we are entering a time of "post-modernist" or "post-bourgeois" or "post-rational" culture, then we may be able to muster some sense of what he means: he is trying to suggest that Western culture has abandoned the norms and securities of the liberal enlightenment, or that it is finished with the need to experiment and transvalue. But I cannot imagine that Mr. Steiner wishes to say anything so limited. He seems to be toying with the notion that we will soon be living in a world that has left behind or gone beyond the institutions, traditions, activities, and values—especially as these adhere to the Word—which we associate with culture in general. Whether this is even possible, he does not ask.

Having stimulated himself with high Germanic notions about culture, Mr. Steiner now seems to be suffering from a bad let-down. "What good did high humanism do the oppressed mass of the community? What use was it when barbarism came? What immortal poem has ever stopped or mitigated political terror?" These questions, in their hopeless mixture of innocence and corruption, are precisely the questions that can be heard in any freshman class. What's the good of Plato if he "came out of" a slave society? How can I enjoy Chaucer if he contains anti-Semitic passages? Why study physics if scientists made the atom bomb? Several times, in this spirit, Mr. Steiner remarks that Beethoven concerts were held in Munich while people were being tortured in nearby Buchenwald.

To both our freshmen and Mr. Steiner, though with varying degrees of patience, one must give a number of familiar answers: that culture is by no means the only value, nor always the highest value, of human existence; that the kind of questions he asks are likely to be put by those who had mistakenly supposed that culture *is* the highest value of human existence; that the cultural achievements of the past must be seen not only as conditioned and thereby contaminated by historical exigencies, but also as "transhistorical" or "potential" works which survive those exigencies; that great works of culture are radically defenseless, being available to use and misuse by persons of all kinds, from saints to butchers; and that there is always likely to be an inherent conflict between the domain of culture and the demands of morality.

In the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust Mr. Steiner finds the turning-point of Western culture. One feels that there must be merit in this view, though exactly what it means is very hard to say. What, after all, *can* it mean? Are we to abandon, as hopelessly besmirched, the heritage of Western culture? Are we to cease engaging in those activities by means of which, well or badly, we maintain that heritage? One can hardly suppose that Mr. Steiner means anything so extreme. Does he then propose that we take a more skeptical attitude toward ideologists of culture, those aristocrats of the Word who dominated European literary life for a good many decades before the Holocaust and who often proved less than heroic when it came? Here any sensible person would agree.

Again one suspects Mr. Steiner has more in mind, as witness his fashionable references to the Third World and to the fact, or supposed fact, that young people no longer take for granted "the image of Western culture as self-evidently superior." Yet the very values Mr. Steiner would like to advance—where do they come from but Western culture? And those Jews who survived the camps, Jews who one presumes are precious to his imagination—how are they to find sustenance in the scraps of "post-culture," what are they to live by if not the heritage that somehow they have kept?

The claim that after the Holocaust nothing can again be as once it was in our cultural and intellectual experience must strike some deep chords in our being, just as does the repeated verbal injunction by some writers that the only authentic response to the Holocaust is silence. But there are elemental continuities in our existence which, even if they make us uncomfortable, cannot be denied. People continue to live; living, they develop a culture; and at this moment it would seem just as well that it be grounded, with whatever modulations, in the Western tradition. This means to accept—as if we had a choice!—the bone in our throats: the knowledge of

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the possible misuses of culture, the memory of the topographical, and spiritual, juxtaposition of Weimar and Buchenwald. Speaking of that juxtaposition, the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer of Mr. Steiner's book aptly remarked: "There are facts that the mind can do nothing with, and this seems to be one of them: by itself it offers neither condemnation nor vindication of Western liberal culture."

Even those Jewish writers who employ Yiddish and Hebrew find themselves obliged to live by some such view. Mr. Steiner, though notably distraught over the fate of the Jews in general, pays very little attention to Jews in particular. Surely, no one is under the slightest obligation to know a Jewish language or be familiar with the writings of Yiddish and Hebrew poets and novelists; but a cultural critic who has become distinguished for his concern with the fate of the Jews—*he*, one would think, might trouble to find out what they have been saying in the post-Holocaust years. He might look into Jacob Glatstein's poems about the Holocaust, or into Aaron Zeitlin's "I Believe," a long Yiddish poem that deals with some of the matters troubling Mr. Steiner:

Can I then choose not to believe
in that living God whose purposes
when He destroys, seeming to forsake me,
I cannot conceive;
choose not to believe in Him
Who having turned my body to fine ash
begins once more to wake me?
(translated by Robert Friend)

Among the survivors themselves—actual, bodied Jews and not merely tokens of literary gesture—a dominant motif is not that of discarding or declaring obsolete the traditions of either the Jews themselves or Western culture but rather of reasserting them in defiance of Gentile history. Mr. Steiner would be at liberty, if he wished, to regard such assertions as parochial or ritualistic or inconsequent, but given the concerns that dominate his book, it would be appropriate if he knew something about them.

There is, however, one respect in which Mr. Steiner's claim that the Holocaust is the great turning-point in modern life ought to be insistently affirmed, and that is in our politics, a low order of affairs with which he will apparently have little commerce. If someone were to write that after Hitler and Stalin, intellectuals must never, no matter what the occasion or pretext, allow themselves to provide ideological rationales for the suppression of liberty, he would be saying something profoundly important. If he were so unmannerly as to name a few of the intellectuals who, in behalf of the Revolution or the Third World, do provide such rationales, he would be performing a double service. But about such mundane matters not a word enters *In Bluebeard's Castle*.

MR. STEINER, in a final chapter called "Tomorrow," proposes to "offer conjectures as to what may be synapses worth watching." The conjectures have to do with the familiar problem of the relation between high culture and mass literacy, the "musicalization of our culture," and the growing dominance of mathematics and science, all of which threaten to destroy the power of the Word. About this threat Mr. Steiner is either unclear in his mind or so ambivalent as to seem unclear. Part of what he says is commonplace and thereby acceptable, part an effort to hop onto the disintegrating bandwagon of the "counter-culture." At times Mr. Steiner sounds like a humanist in mourning. At other times he can write, "Personally, I feel most drawn to the conviction, irrational, even tactless as it may be, that it is enormously interesting to be alive at this cruel, late stage in Western affairs." Perhaps; but as a conclusion to so darkly portentous a book or as a statement of cultural diagnosis, this *Saturday Review*-like sentence, chin up and best foot forward, seems absurd.

There is, however, no reason to get angry, no reason until one remembers the central point of the book: the gas ovens and the collapse of Western culture, the juxtaposition of Weimar and Buchenwald. And then it is hard to remain calm. After all those rumblings of apocalypse, is *this* to be the conclusion? The critic declaring the death of Western culture in the ovens of Auschwitz—he can then, a few pages later, content himself with the journalistic fatuity of "it is enormously interesting to be alive etc. etc."? One minute Western culture is dying, and the next we are to be charmed by new developments in linguistics and long-playing records?

There is something strange and tasteless in so extreme an incongruence. One fails to understand, one looks for complex explanations. But perhaps the truth is really simple, perhaps this book is just an old-fashioned case of teakettle chopping (cf. Uriel Weinreich, *Modern English-Yiddish Yiddish-English Dictionary*, p. 202, col. 1, entry 15).

Theodore Frankel

1922-1971

WE mourn the passing of Theodore Frankel, former member of the COMMENTARY editorial staff, valued contributor, and dear friend.

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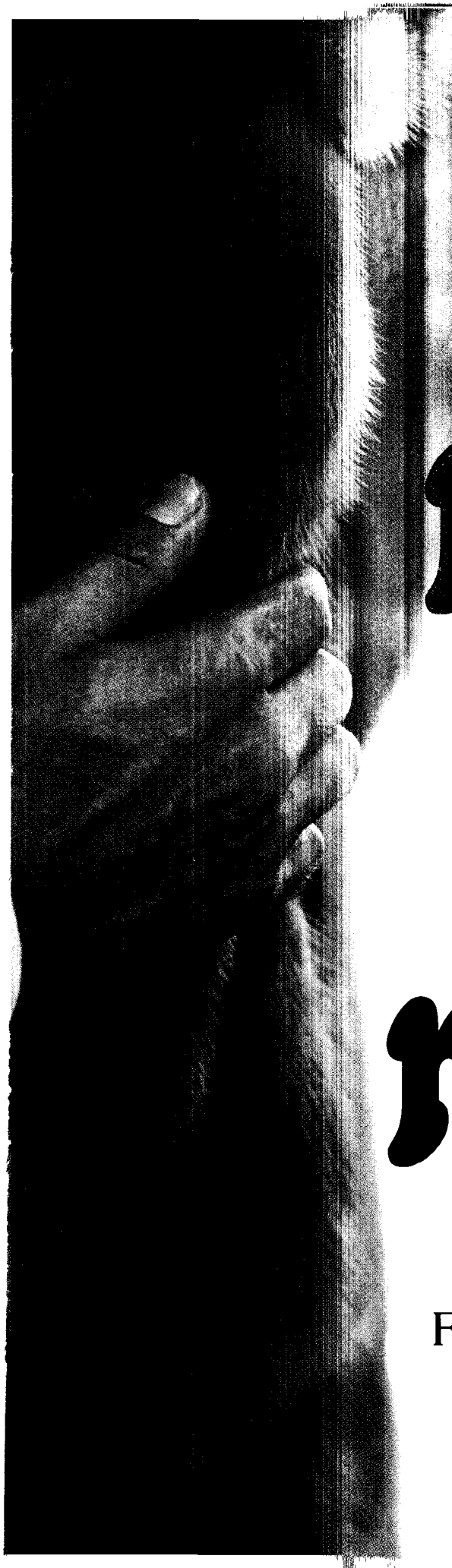

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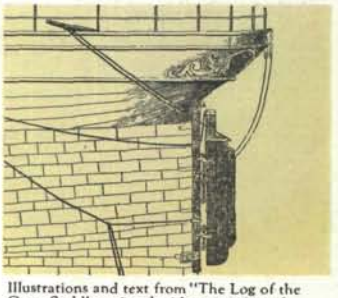

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